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# SIX SERMONS,

DELIVERED AT THE

GENERAL CONVENTION OF UNIVERSALISTS,

AT ITS

ANNUAL SESSION IN CONCORD, N. H.

ON THE

NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH SEPTEMBER 1832.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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It has been suggested by several Ministerial Brethren and others, that the publication of these discourses, delivered at the late Universalist Convention, in a small neat volume, would be very acceptable to the Universalist public ; and might, among other laudable efforts, aid in extending a knowledge of gospel truth, as understood and inculcated in this denomination of Christians.

A copy of the several sermons having been obtained, they are now, in the hope of their extensive usefulness, respectfully presented to the public, by its

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## SERMON 1.

BY SYLVANUS COBB.

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DEUTERONOMY XXX : 15. See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.

THE love of happiness is common to all men, and is inseparable from a conscious existence. Man's very *existence* as a conscious and intellectual being, must be destroyed, in order to destroy his love of happiness. While he has power to exert himself, his exertions will be aimed, in general, at the promotion of his enjoyment.

I know that some learned divines denominate this self-love, and these exertions for the happiness of one's self, altogether vile and wicked. They say that men cannot conduct acceptably in the sight of God, but when they act upon *disinterested* principles, having no regard to self. However men may *theorize* on such a principle, it *cannot* be reduced to practice. For, I repeat it, a love of happiness is inseparable from human existence. And it is on this principle in the constitution of human nature, that the scriptures

found all the promises of reward and threatenings of punishment, designed to influence the moral conduct. And it is with reference to the same principle that the *promises of the gospel* are communicated unto us, to render us more happy here through hope of greater good to come.

Consequently to urge upon man, under the name of holiness, an absolute indifference to his own allotment, is to urge upon him a principle which is not only contrary to the constitution of mind which God has given us, but which is also at war with every chapter of the Bible, and would render inapplicable and nugatory all the scripture instructions. Could a man be changed into such a state of indifference, it would be a matter of no consequence to him, whether the reward of *virtue* were *misery*, and the reward of *vice*, *happiness* ; or whether it were the reverse. It would no otherwise affect his gratitude or his peace, to be taught that "God is love," than it would to be taught that he is full of wrath and malevolence. It would be a matter of total indifference to him, whether Jesus Christ was ordained to be his *Saviour*, or his *Destroyer*. He would be incapable of *hoping* for future good ; because what a man *hopes* for, he both expects and *desires*,—which implies a *choice* that is incompatible with a state of *indifference*.

Now we are fully persuaded that the scriptures do not mean to urge upon us any principle as the

requisite holiness, which would overthrow the whole scheme of Bible instruction, and which would disqualify us for enjoying the hopes and consolations, and for feeling the obligations which the scriptures are designed to inculcate. It is in commendatory recognition of this inextinguishable love of happiness in man, that the Lord said by Moses as in the text, "*See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.*"

The doctrine of the text is, that life and good, and death and evil, are placed before mankind, within their immediate reach. That by taking one course, they shall find, not a life given as an extraneous matter in some other world, after this course shall be ended, but, shall find life and good *in that course*. They shall find *that way itself to be life and good*. It is set before them as such. And by taking the opposite course, they shall find, not death and evil put off beyond the last end of that course, to be suffered as an extraneous matter in some other world, but shall find death and evil *in that course*. They shall find *that way itself to be death and evil*. They are notified of it as such. "*See, I have set before thee, this day, life and good, and death and evil.*"

This text of scripture is almost always in the mouths of those preachers who assert that the *eternal states* of men are determined by the choice

they make in this life. In representing to their people the life and good, and death and evil, which God engaged by this scripture to mete to men accordingly as they should choose for themselves in regard to their conduct, they paint the blessedness and the glory of the immortal and heavenly state, which they say is to be procured by human exertions here,—and describe the supposed horrors of the world of hopeless woe, to which many, as they contend, shall be at last doomed, by reason of the choice they make for themselves on earth.

This is attaching to the conduct of frail man in his momentary earthly state, consequences so tremendous, as must overwhelm to distraction any mind which believes it, and has of it any realizing view. The only reason why more who assent to such sentiments are not driven to distraction and miserable wretchedness, is, that they do but take a slight view of the names of things, and their minds extend not to grasp the immensity of this subject.

The teachers of the doctrine which attaches infinite, irreversible consequences to the present doings of man, profess to be much concerned to have their people become more deeply sensible of their situation in view of such sentiment. They labour hard to make the people feel the sentiment, thus expressed by Watts :

“ Good God, on what a slender thread  
Hang everlasting things ;  
Th’ eternal states of all the dead,  
Upon life’s feeble strings.  
Infinite joy, or endless wo,  
Attends on every breath !”

At times they do succeed to cause many, especially of the young, tender, and uninformed, to feel, in a great degree, the sense of the situation in which such doctrine represents them, and the excitement which this produces, they call a *revival of religion*. But the subjects of this excitement, generally, for the time being, are made incapable for both the duties and the enjoyments of life ; and it is not until after the sense of the situation in which their doctrine represents them has much worn off, even with those who stand as professors of religion, that they seem to know how to act, or to possess power to enjoy. And I view it a happy circumstance that the minds of mankind in general are incapable of receiving and retaining a realizing sense of the doctrine which I speak of. Yes, it is truly a grateful circumstance that the minds of so few of those who *subscribe* to this doctrine, are capable of receiving and retaining a realizing sense of it. For if they should all retain a deep sense of the situation in which it represents them, the tremendous consequences which it attaches to their every thought, word, and deed, they would all inevitably be, what the few have become who have im-

bibed and retained a sense of it—*wretched maniacs*.

It is impossible that it should be otherwise. No man can long retain the proper balance of his mind, the exercise of his rational powers, if he really feels pressing down upon him the weight of infinite consequences pending his present doings. He may think that he has found religion, and has become a disciple of Jesus; but if he really believes the doctrine which holds that there is a possibility of his being deceived with regard to the genuineness of his experience, and also that, however genuine his present experience, and however good his present conduct, he is liable to be led away in future by temptation into sin, and that *endless* life and good, and *endless* death and evil, hang pending, to be turned, one or the other, to his lot, by his doings in this life;—if, I say, he should really believe such doctrine, and have a realizing sense of the situation in which it places him, the weight of it pressing down upon him, would break away one and another mental cord, until his mind would become entirely wrecked.

Hence I say, it is a happy circumstance, that so few minds are capable of imbibing and retaining a realizing sense of this mind-destroying doctrine. But I have known some minds to be destroyed by it. Their sensing the doctrine which piles infinite consequences upon their present

works, brought a crushing weight upon their minds, which was like taking the stupendous load of the strongest *rail-way carriage*, and casting it upon the *hand-cart of a child*. And I have known numbers whose credulity and sensibility have not been such as to place them so directly under the weight of this doctrine as to be entirely wrecked by it, who have yet received such a *strain* upon their mental powers as to be rendered less active, less useful, and less happy, through life.

But there are other evil effects produced by the doctrine which we are considering, besides the injury which it inflicts on those who most sincerely believe it ;—one of which is the following. It labours to influence the present conduct of men by the consideration of those distant, extraneous, and *infinite* consequences before mentioned, and hereby causes them to overlook the *real* consequences of human conduct which it is essential that they should appreciate. And then to many, these infinite consequences, which this doctrine attaches to the works of frail mortals here, appear so vast, so inconceivable, so unreasonable, and so boundless, beyond all proportion with their merits or demerits, that they exceed their credulity, and thus their minds become insensible to their influence. Thus being taught to overlook the real and legitimate consequences of human

doings, and carried away to contemplate those imaginary, vast, and distant consequences, to the influence of which their minds have become insensible, because they exceed their credulity, they are left destitute of either the *proper* stimulants and restraints, or *those which men endeavored to substitute.*

But the believer in the doctrine against which I am now objecting, will begin to complain that I make too free use of practical observation and human reason. "We ought not to exalt our reason on this subject," says he, "but risk the consequence of a close adherence to the word of God. God declares that he has placed life and death before his creatures, and given to them the liberty of choice. And this word we are bound to believe, however obnoxious it may appear to our reason, and whatever may be the consequence of so believing."

Yes, we *will* believe God's word, and to it I now appeal for a decision of the case in question. But I have no fear that God's word will be found obnoxious to reason, or that any evil consequence shall result from its being sincerely and practically believed. It does indeed declare saying, "I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil." And to the same authority I appeal for decision concerning this life and good, and death and evil,—*what they are, and where to be experienced.*



See the text with its explanatory context. "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil ; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his judgments, that thou mayest *live and multiply* : and the Lord thy God *shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.*" This is the life and good which God set before the people, to be procured by their doings ; it is *life and blessedness in the land of Canaan*, which they were about going to possess.

To proceed,—verse 17. "But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away and worship other gods, and serve them,—I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days in the land whither thou passest over Jordan to go and possess it."

Hence it is seen that the "*death and evil*" which their conduct might bring upon them, was the suffering of distress in the land,—the same land in which they should disobey, and their being destroyed out of that land, or cut off from it. The address proceeds, from Moses the servant of God. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing : therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live ; that

thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him ; (for he is thy life, and the length of thy days ;) that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

This doctrine is reasonable and practical. It is as unlike the doctrine of men before considered, as light is unlike darkness, and truth unlike error. It holds forth to our choice, and to induce us to virtue, that life and good which is *properly connected* with the practice of goodness and truth, and grows up in it. And to dissuade us from vice, it denounces that death and evil which is *properly connected* with the practice of sin, and grows up in it. I say, this doctrine holds forth to *us* these inducements and restraints, for although the words of the text were immediately addressed to the children of Israel, and declared the good and evil which they should enjoy or suffer, according to their doings, in the land of Canaan, yet they speak a sentiment which is of *universal application*. In all ages, and in all places, *godliness is life and good*, and *sin is death and evil*.

1. *Godliness is life and good*. I deem it important that this sentiment of the Bible should be often, by various arguments and illustrations,

urged home upon the consideration of mankind, especially of the young. The tender uninformed child comes forward with pantings after happiness, every voluntary action aimed at the promotion of his enjoyment. How great then is the evil to him, of that system of education, which impresses him with the idea that his wished for happiness *in this world*, will be, perhaps, *most likely* to be found in the way of sin ;—which represents that the services of religion are mere *penances* here ; and which, having sunk those lively incentives to godliness which the Bible presents, attempts to substitute the consideration of that distant and infinite reward, the thought of which, as pending on his feeble exertions, overwhelms his mind with distraction and dismay. Many young minds have been driven by such distracting sentiments, to seek relief in carelessness and thoughtlessness, putting off a consideration of the subject of religion.

But the *Bible* presents a way of instruction, into which *children* may look and not be distracted, and in which they may walk and not err. It shows the child that *godliness*, which consists in trusting and loving God, and practising moral virtue, *is itself* that very present happiness which he so eagerly desires. It declares, in language, that cannot be misunderstood, that “Wisdom’s ways *are* ways of pleasantness, and all her paths

are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her." Again, "Great peace have they that love God's law, and nothing shall offend them." And again, "*In keeping God's judgments, (or commands,) there is great reward.*"

*This is our doctrine, and it is the doctrine of the Bible.* About this there is no mistake. And *who, and where,* is the blasphemer against Bible and reason, that will pronounce this a licentious doctrine? As much as you all love enjoyment, if you really believe this doctrine, that wisdom's or virtue's ways, are ways of pleasantness, and *all* her paths are peace, that she is a tree of life to every one that layeth hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her;—I say, if you really believe this, as much as you love enjoyment, you will seek to possess yourselves of the principles, and to walk in the practice of virtue. And with this sentiment the Bible abounds. What few passages we can quote in one discourse, are in comparison with the whole that teach it, as the drop to the bucket. "Ho, every one that thirsteth," saith God's prophet, "come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye

that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me ; hear, and your soul shall live."

Here the prophet holds up before us a great good which we may obtain unto ourselves by attending to his instructions. Yet it is no other good than that which is found in *the possession* of the instructions and principles of goodness with which heavenly wisdom presents us. The thirsty are invited to come unto the waters ; and the *good* which they are to procure by coming, is the principle of godliness which is represented by the waters, which will reward them for coming, as the waters reward the thirsty for drinking.

Again, "Wherefore do ye spend your labour for that which *satisfieth* not ? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." It is plain that all the reward which is here held out to induce men to seek and practise righteousness and truth, is the good which they should find these principles themselves to constitute. They were to possess themselves of these principles as that which should yield them satisfaction, and make their souls to delight themselves in fatness.

And then the word *life*, as in our text, is employed to express the same good. "Hear, and your soul shall *live*." The soul's *living* as expressed here, is the same as its delighting itself in fatness as in the preceding verse. Hearken

unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and *let your soul delight itself in fatness.* Incline your ear and come unto me ; hear, and *your soul shall live.*" That is, your soul or mind, by possessing itself of the principles of righteousness and truth, would hereby find itself eating that which is good, and rejoicing in the fatness or richness of moral life and blessedness.

But here our doctrinal opposers would come forward, and with a coldness which would seem to bespeak a non-acquaintance with the sublime pleasures and enjoyments of true religion or godliness, declare that the inducements which I now offer to virtue are altogether insufficient. The *present* rewards of godliness which I have now been urging, they speak of as a matter too inconsiderable to be held out as sufficient inducements to the service of God. Nothing is sufficient to be held out as an inducement to engage and hold men in the service of God, but the promise of an eternity of blessedness hereafter, as the reward of their labours *here*.

But would not these religious people be as well satisfied to have it understood that they shall enjoy great *present* benefits as the reward of their righteousness here, and then receive that immortal life and blessedness in the future world as the gift of *God's grace*, not according to their works, but according to his own good pleasure, whereby he will gather into the same life and blessedness

his whole rational family ? Would not this view, I say, satisfy them as well ? No. For this would allow those who are not holy here, to be holy and happy hereafter. No ; they must have it understood that they are to receive *immortal life and glory*, in eternal distinction from their sinful neighbors, as the *reward of their labours here*, else there is no sufficient inducement for them to serve God !

How passing strange ! Why, these same people were just now arguing that all *selfishness* is *sin* ; and that all the services which we perform with regard to our own benefit are sinful in the sight of God. No services, they said, could be acceptable unto God, but such as proceed from a supreme regard to holiness, in *disinterestedness* with regard to self. *And as Universalists*, who love God because he first loved us, and profess that one great encouragement we have to continue in the service of God, is the great happiness which we find in it ; *us* they condemn as unholy, because our religion, they say, is *selfishness*.

We deny not that we are selfish. And we are willing to be understood as maintaining it as *right* that we should exercise self love enough to regard our own happiness, providing we do not get into that *exclusive* selfishness, which would seek our own interest to the injury of others, or would be unwilling that others should be sharers of hap-

piness with us. But selfish as we acknowledge ourselves to be, all our selfishness is abundantly satisfied with the rewards of virtue which we find here *in the practice* of virtue. We feel satisfied that our reward is altogether sufficient, we are abundantly compensated in the happiness which we find *in loving and serving* our heavenly Father; and are willing that the whole human creation should finally be redeemed from the bondage of corruption and sin, and all our dependent fellow-creatures made sharers of God's love in common with ourselves.

But these persons who condemn our self-love, and profess to exclude *all* selfishness from the principles of godliness, are yet so *monstrously* and *exorbitantly* selfish themselves, that nothing but the prospect of an immortal life of blessedness, in infinite distinction from others who do not serve as they do here, can satisfy their selfishness as any competent inducement to engage and hold them in the service of God! The eyes of their selfishness have become strained and extended to such great objects, that they would have to look through a *microscope* to see the *trifle* which satisfies *our* selfishness as an *abundant inducement* to hold faithful in our heavenly Father's service. Yes, while they sternly condemn our selfishness as corrupt and sinful, which loves to serve God because he is so good to us,—because we feel filial obligations to him, and because we are so



happy in his service,—they are at the same time in constant labour to build up in mankind all around, that exorbitant, exclusive, and monstrous selfishness, which shall regard nothing as a competent inducement for them to serve the Lord, but the prospect of being paid for these present services by an admission to the inheritance of immortal life and glory, to the final exclusion of all who do not serve as they do here !! I must here give place to the words of Jesus,—“Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.”

My friends, I am satisfied with the Bible inducements to godliness, which I have been urging upon you in this discourse ; viz. that *godliness is life and good*. We all desire to enjoy life and good ; and consequently, as much as we believe the sentiment which has now been urged from the scriptures, we shall seek and practise godliness, as our highest good.

I have extended my remarks to so great a length on the way of life and good which God has set before us, that I cannot at present say but a word on the way of death and evil.

2. *The way of sin is death and evil*. We have seen before that the context shows that the death and evil spoken of in the text was the misery and destruction which sin would bring upon the people in the land where they dwelt. This sentiment is as abundantly taught in the Bible, as

that which we have just considered. While the Bible teaches that, "To be spiritually minded is life and peace," it teaches also that "to be carnally minded is death." That "there is no peace to the wicked,"—that "destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known."

Here then are the two ways which God has set before us. On the one hand is the knowledge, trust, and love of God, and the practice of moral virtue ; and this is the way of life and good. On the other hand is the way of ignorance and vice; and this is the way of death and evil. And this life and good, or death and evil, we are to enjoy or suffer, according to our choice between these two ways. We shall enjoy this life and good just as long as we pursue the way of godliness, and we shall suffer this death and evil, just as long as we pursue the way of sin.

"But we cannot believe," say some, "that all sinners suffer sufficient punishment in the state in which they sin. Are there not many wicked people who get along through life without suffering competent punishment?" Surely I know of none. But if sinners cannot be sufficiently punished while they *are* sinners, when can they be punished? After they have abandoned sin, and engaged through love, in the service of God? Will their heavenly Father *then* lay upon them

stripes in revenge for their having once sinned ? None will admit this. When will you have sinners sufficiently punished then, if not while they are sinners ? If you have them continue to be sinners in the *future* world for the sake of making them subjects of punishment *there*, it will not alter the state of the case. You only make them punishable while they are sinners ;—I do not mean merely while they are doing some external act of sin, but while they remain in the disposition and character of sinners.

Hence, we are unavoidably brought again to this immoveable scriptural position ; viz. that the way of sin is a way of death and evil ; and men must suffer the death and evil, as long as they continue in the way of sin. This is the doctrine of our text, and of reason, and of observation, and of experience.

My hearers, we now have before us a wholesome practical sentiment. It does not attach such infinite and tremendous consequences to our present conduct, as to dismay and distract us, and paralyze our exertions. We bless God that he hath given us gratefully to trust in his power and grace, for that immortal life, the hope of which our souls need, and which he has not put it into our power either to *squander away*, or to boast as procuring by our *merits*. But God has placed before us that good and evil, attached

to our doings here, which, while not so tremendous as to disqualify the mind for calmly considering them, are yet amply sufficient to influence the mind that learns the truth in the case, to "eschew evil, and do good."

## SERMON 2.

BY SEBASTIAN STREETER.

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1 TIMOTHY IV : 10—11. We trust in the living God who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. These things command and teach.

I HAVE purposely omitted the first clause of the tenth verse. It refers to the persecutions and sufferings of the apostles and primitive christians. An open profession of the gospel, and a zealous, untemporising devotion to its interests exposed them to many and deep disasters. Their persons, their reputation, their property—every worldly hope and comfort were put in jeopardy. They became the sport of an enraged superstition, the victims of a relentless and insatiable cruelty.

I have not, therefore, passed by that clause of the verse, because I deem the matter of it too trivial to merit an attentive consideration. I certainly do not. Nothing can be further from my feelings. The reproaches and sufferings of the early martyrs to the great cause of the Redeemer, form a subject of unspeakable interest to every

real christian, and to no one more so than to myself ; but it is no part of my object in the present discourse to enter into a discussion of this particular topic.

I purpose to state the doctrine of the text in plain terms, and then offer a few reasons why some receive and others reject it.

With respect then to the doctrine inculcated in the scripture before us, I remark, that it is plainly that of universal salvation. This is a fact, than which, it would seem, no one can be more evident. If any reliance can be placed upon the most simple and unequivocal language, the text obviously proves that this doctrine was believed and preached in the apostolic age, and by the apostles themselves. If this were not the fact, how can the claims of Paul to the character of common honesty and ingenuousness be sustained? He solemnly declared, " We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men." Was not this the same, substantially, as to aver, We believe in the doctrine of universal salvation? We sincerely think it was ; and is it possible that we should be mistaken in this case? If we are, it is in the most artless and innocent way conceivable; and one too, which gives us the strongest claims upon the indulgence and compassion both of God and of man, because our mistake has arisen from taking the plainest language of the holy scriptures in its most natural and obvious acceptation.

It should be remembered also, as a further excuse for our deception, if we are deceived, that this language was employed under peculiar and highly interesting circumstances—those which demanded the use of the most select and explicit terms. It was solemnly addressed by Paul to Timothy—a young convert, who had just entered upon the duties of the christian ministry—who must have been exceedingly anxious to know what the leading truths were in the doctrine which he was to preach, and who must also have entertained a strong confidence in the competency of this apostle, his own father in the christian faith, to instruct him correctly on this point. He knew him to be eminently distinguished for an open, honest, fearless and strait-forward course. In these respects, no one stood above Paul.

What then, under these circumstances, would Timothy naturally understand by the solemn, apostolic declaration, “We trust in the living God who is the Saviour of all men?” Is it possible that he should have understood Paul to assert, or even to imply, that, according to the belief of christians generally, and of himself, in particular, God was the Saviour of a part only of mankind? In other words, that notwithstanding the fulness of grace and truth revealed in the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of the Son of God, only here and there one of the human race would be eventually saved?

I do not ask whether it is probable that Timothy would so have understood the apostle ; but whether such a thing is within the remotest limits of possibility ? And I answer without hesitancy, that, in my own opinion, it is not. If I am not grossly mistaken, it is one of the very last things which could have come into the mind of Timothy, or, of any other man who possessed a spark of common sense ; and, who had the least acquaintance with the character of Paul, or the legitimate import of language.

The most natural construction which can be put upon the apostle's declaration, is, that he, and those associated with him in the christian ministry, believed and preached the doctrine of the salvation of all men through the grace of God manifested in Christ Jesus ; and that they solemnly enjoined upon all whom they inducted into the same holy ministry to believe and preach the same doctrine.

Hence he charges Timothy, as in the latter verse of the text, " These things command and teach." Now the things which Timothy was required to command and teach as a christian minister, were, among others, that " the living God is the Saviour of all men ;" but in a special manner of those who have a true faith in him, as such ; and, that this peculiar feature of the christian faith was the chief cause of the reproaches



and persecutions which were heaped upon the early friends and defenders of the gospel.

In this view of the subject, there are no difficulties—nothing to perplex the mind. All appears plain and natural, though not justifiable. There were no just provocations for the obloquy and sufferings to which the apostles and early christians were subjected ; but still, we can plainly perceive the grounds upon which they were administered. Had the primitive christians professed to believe in the living God, as one among the numberless divinities worshipped by the heathen of that age, they would have escaped the violence of the Roman government ; and had they professed to believe in him as the special friend and exclusive Saviour of the Jewish nation, they would have avoided the indignation and cruelty of the chief priests and rulers of that deluded people.

I may remark again, that, had Paul and the other apostles professed to believe in the living God, as the Saviour of only a part of mankind, by those of discriminating opinions and feelings, they might have secured the friendship and co-operation of many nominal christians from both these quarters, who, on their conversion, brought with them into the christian church, the superstitious prejudices, and partial sentiments of their early education.

But had they pursued either of these courses, they must have despised themselves. They knew better. They must, therefore, have been temporising dissemblers, utterly unworthy of the great and glorious cause of their Master. They would have been distinguished from the mass of Jews and heathen around them by their name alone, and some circumstantial and indifferent peculiarities.

But such was not their election. They dared to be honest men. They determined to be honest men, and to leave the event with the God in whom they trusted. They were honest men. Such, they lived, and such, they died, and as such, they ought to be copied by every one who names the name of Christ. They believed in the living God as the Saviour of all men, and they fearlessly and openly proclaimed their faith in the ears of the world. They did this under the certain conviction that this distinguishing peculiarity in their sentiments would not fail to bring upon them the jealousy and virulent opposition of all descriptions of religionists. Jews, and Gentiles, and false brethren, they knew, would be equally unsparing in their reproaches. History evinces that this was the fact.

Now such violent measures, fomented and pursued by such high and almost universal authority, tended very naturally, and I may say, inevitably, to intimidate and discourage ordinary

minds ; and hence, as might have been expected, the great body of christians, in process of time, relinquished this distinguishing and paramount article of primitive christianity, and adopted a creed which corresponded better with the prevailing partialities and superstitions of the world.

There have always been, however, some high and fearless minds, some master-spirits, which were inflexible,—which numbers, and names, and dangers could not awe ; and which, therefore, could neither be subdued nor silenced. Regardless of personal security, or of popular applause, they have publicly professed, and zealously propagated, this sublime and all-interesting article of pure christianity. They have perceived in it a moral grandeur and glory worthy of the great and ever-blessed God—a compassion suited to the helpless and miserable condition of a world lying in ruins by sin. These discoveries were analogous to the largeness and benevolence of their own great minds. They answered their prayers. They filled the measure of their hopes and their joys. They armed them with a panoply more than mortal ; and though they fell martyrs in the conflict, they were “ more than conquerors through him that loved them.”

The great object of their efforts was obtained. They disseminated the truth in the world, and deepened its impressions in the hearts of their

fellow-men. Their sentiments outlived the violence by which they themselves were cut off ; and they will continue to live and to flourish till they fill the whole earth. They are immortal, and destined to become universal. The enemies of these devoted men tauntingly applied to them the epithet—"merciful doctors," a title which, however contemptible in the eyes of those who selected it, Gabriel himself might be proud to bear.

These faithful heralds of the cross were, at times, only a little band ; but their cause they knew to be great, and good, and glorious, and they struggled valiantly against the hosts which rushed in their might upon them. Origen, in the third century, and other kindred spirits, openly professed this doctrine, and labored nobly and zealously for the diffusion of it ; and it was not till the beginning of the fifth century, that it was formally pronounced a heresy, and publicly anathematized by an ecclesiastical council.

From this time till after the subversion of popery by the reformation, the believers in universal salvation were obliged, in a great measure, to conceal their faith. But there were, undoubtedly, in the darkest of the dark ages some who believed it, and who derived from it great consolation and joy. From its first revelation, God has not, I apprehend, left himself without living witnesses to the truth of this great doctrine ; and

the number has, of late years, wonderfully increased ; and it will unquestionably continue to increase in a ratio proportioned to the march of scientific and biblical knowledge in the world. Existing facts and the signs of the times seem plainly to indicate such a result. In no age, if we except the apostolic, has the number of its avowed friends and open advocates borne any comparison with the aggregate of its defenders in the present day. They have become an host, and their ranks are perpetually extending.

I shall now proceed to account for these facts by laying before you several reasons why some ever have believed, and multitudes now do believe, in this God-like and plainly revealed truth.

1. Because it is so consonant to the natural expectations of their minds from an underived, infinite and perfect Being. The gods of the heathen were derived, imperfect, and little things, and of course, but very little could be expected from them. Their warmest devotees admitted their finitude, their imperfection, and their dependence.

They held, it is true, to a supreme Jupiter, a sort of sullen and idle generalissimo among their imaginary host of divinities and demi-divinities ; but then, he was merely a sovereign drone. They would have been as secure, and as well off without him as with him. He did nothing, and he was good for nothing. He neither created nor

preserved, saved nor damned any one. He was utterly indifferent to every interest and being, whether divine or human. To indulge a thought—to exert a single energy, or even to cast one look upon the universe itself, was deemed infinitely beneath the supremacy and grandeur of his nature, and the sublimity of his station in the community of celestial beings.

To create worlds—to people and govern them—to dispense rewards and punishments, was the business of subordinate agents,—it was the work of the demi-gods. These, however, were supposed to be very limited in their capacities, and very partial in their affections. They were made, it was thought, of former conquerors, heroes and eminent statesmen, and had, therefore, many old grudges to gratify, and of course, nothing like universality of favour could reasonably be expected from them.

But with respect to the living God, the case is entirely different. He is, properly speaking, an underived, infinite and perfect Being. He is from everlasting, the only living and independent God. He has no injuries to revenge, and no favors to requite. All he does is on the grounds of condescension and mercy ; and there is nothing too great, or too small, to merit his attention. With him, indeed, all comparisons cease

The time was, if I may so speak, when he existed alone, a solitary, all-pervading Jehovah. A shapeless chaos stretched over the illimitable void now occupied by the material universe. All intellectual and moral beings slept in a peaceful and unoffending nonentity. Not a want was known—not a pain was felt—not a tear was dropped—not a sigh nor a groan was heard through all the vast regions of boundless space. Under such circumstances, age after age rolled slowly and quietly away. Under such circumstances the living God proceeded deliberately to the creation of the world and of man.

He had all along been perfectly secure and blessed in the communion and enjoyment of his own infinite perfections. He was so at the moment in which he conferred existence upon the human race. His own nature felt no disquietude—no lack of perfect felicity. No, it was a boundless ocean of bliss without a ripple upon its bosom. Such was the living God when he made man, and when the foundations of the physical and moral worlds were laid. And what, under such circumstances, would a rational being naturally expect from the creative exertions of infinite wisdom, and goodness, and blessedness, clothed with the energies of Almighty power? Would he anticipate evil or good, pain or pleasure from the existences to be conferred? We think,

the latter. We have no doubts upon the subject.

Such a Being, under such circumstances, could not have created man, nor any other order of intelligences, on his own account, to increase his own glory, or greatness, or felicity ; because these, from their essential infinity, were incapable of augmentation. He must, therefore, it would seem, have created man, and all rational beings, on their account, to communicate to them, according to their respective capacities, a portion of his own infinite beatitude.

We conclude, therefore, and we think on strictly philosophical principles, that under the government of the living God, no creature can be a loser by its existence ; and that every rational being must be, eventually, an unspeakable gainer by it. I offer, therefore, this natural expectation from an underived, infinite and perfect God as one reason, though not of itself, perhaps, one of unquestionable validity, why some believe the doctrine of universal salvation.

2. The conformity of this doctrine to the nature and character of God as exhibited in the works of creation and providence, has induced many to believe in its truth. In these departments, his favors seem to be impartially distributed. He opens his hand and supplies the wants of every living thing. And in his epistle to the Romans, Paul tells us that the "invisible



things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."

Now that the creation of the material world was a high exertion of the Divine power, is a fact too obvious, it would seem, to be disputed by any reasonable mind ; but still, there are those who make great pretensions to superior wisdom and acquirements, who deny that the creation is any proof of the existence of a God ; or, if such a Being exist, that it is any proof of his power or wisdom ; and if there be those who deny these facts, it is not very strange that there should be others who contend that the creation affords no evidence of the impartial goodness and mercy of God.

Many, however, can see in the world around them, the most convincing proofs of all these facts. To them, the creation abounds with evidences of the Divine power, wisdom and love. The inspired apostle was of this number. He saw in the physical world, as he terms it, " the things that are made," satisfactory evidence, not only of the existence of God ; but also of the invisible properties of his nature ; in his own phraseology, " his invisible things," by which I understand, the wise and benevolent purposes of his mind.

It is easy to perceive the grounds on which the works of creation make known the pleasure and designs of the Creator. The works of every being disclose the feelings, purposes, and operations of his mind. They lay open to public inspection the perfection or imperfection, the benevolence or malevolence, of his intellectual powers. Now God made the world, and all its inhabitants, precisely to suit himself. He had no adviser, no dictator in the enterprise. Their condition, therefore, and the provision made for their security and comfort must be the infallible indices of the Divine will and feelings respecting them.

Let it be remarked then, that the creation everywhere exhibits marks of the most benevolent designs, and of means wisely arranged to carry them into effect. Every order of beings is admirably fitted to its condition; and for every want ample provision is made. In the arrangements for man and the larger animals, the humble fowl, and fish, and insect are not overlooked. By the hand of the living God, all that live and move in the worlds of earth, and air, and water are daily and abundantly supplied with "food convenient for them."

The sun, the moon and the stars are lamps which he has lighted and hung up in the concave on high, for the convenience of all his creatures. They are all cheered by their beams

and invigorated by their warmth. They all breathe the air of their Maker, drink at his fountains, and eat the fruit which drops from the trees of his planting. Now, the living God is strictly unchangeable. From everlasting to everlasting, he is in one mind and none can turn him. If, therefore, he hath hitherto protected and blessed all his creatures, we infer that he will continue to do it while they exist. But the former he has done, therefore the latter he will do. This is a plain, logical conclusion; and with respect to mankind, it obviously involves the doctrine of the endless exercise of the Divine favour towards all of them. I present this fact then, as another reason why some believe in the salvation of all men.

3. The consistency of this doctrine with the revealed character and will of God, has produced a conviction of its truth in a vast number of minds. After all our speculations on these interesting subjects, it must be admitted, that our knowledge of God, and of his purposes with respect to the final destiny of men, must be chiefly drawn from the records of revelation. Nature speaks upon them, and sheds some light upon them; but her voice is feeble, and her light is faint. We must go for decisive information to the surer word of divine truth. There we may reasonably expect to find it.

What then, does revelation teach us with respect to the Divine nature? It declares, unequivocally and repeatedly, that "God is love." This is the very essence of his nature. It is pure, boundless, endless, unvarying love.

Such is the nature of the Being in whom all men live, and move, and have their being; and in whom they will continue to live, and move, and have a being forever.

Is it not absurd then, to suppose that any man will be the victim of interminable misery? that a God whose nature is perfect love will doom him to it, or permit any other being or power to lure, or drive him to this insufferable catastrophe? We think it is. The scriptures, we know, in a figurative way, speak of the Divine anger, and wrath, and hatred. But they nowhere assert, in so many words, "God is anger—God is wrath—or, God is hatred." No, such declarations are not within the lids of the good Book. But it is affirmed repeatedly and unequivocally, that "God is love."

Now it is the nature of love not to injure; but to do all possible good to the subjects of it. "Love worketh no ill to its neighbour." But all men are the objects of the Divine love. John says, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." David exclaims, "The Lord

is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." The son of Sirach also declares, "He loveth all that he hath made, and hateth nothing, for never would he have made any thing if he had hated it."

Now we have seen already that it is the nature of love to seek the highest possible good of its object; and, that all men are the objects of God's love. But the highest good of all men is eternal salvation. This is also a possible good. They were designed for immortal existence. Their nature is susceptible of endless purity and happiness. The wisdom of God is infinite, and he can, if he will, devise a plan which shall inevitably raise them to this exalted state. His goodness is infinite also, and must have moved him to adopt such a plan. His power is omnipotent, and can, with perfect ease execute any measures which his wisdom and mercy may have devised. Such are the plain facts of the case, and in view of them, it is utterly impossible with many to believe that God is love, and at the same time to resist a belief in the doctrine of universal salvation.

4. The angelic annunciation at the birth of Christ is with some an irresistible evidence of the truth of this doctrine. "Fear not, said the angel, for behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day ——— a Saviour."

Now if countless multitudes of mankind are to be damned eternally, and this angel knew it, why did he mock their miseries by this groundless communication? Why did he come all the way from heaven to earth with a falsehood rankling at his heart, and dropping from his lips? But, if the burden of his song, which was plainly the salvation of all people, be admitted as true, all appears consistent and lovely.

5. The commission of the risen Saviour to his apostles operates strongly upon the minds of a great many in favour of universalism. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Now the gospel is glad tidings of great joy. It announces that a "Saviour of the world is born." But why this annunciation if the doctrine of endless misery be true? Why preach such a gospel to every creature, if there be vast numbers who are never to become the subjects of salvation? Thousands cannot obviate this difficulty, and, therefore, are constrained, either to renounce their faith in revelation, or, to embrace that of universal salvation; and their reason dictates the latter.

6. The extent of the death of Christ is, with not a few, a most powerful reason for the truth of universalism. He died not for a select number. No, if the scriptures are to be credited, "He gave himself a ransom for all. He

tasted death for every man." He died that they "might live not to themselves, but to him that died for them and rose again"—that they might live holy and happy forever. But why did Jesus die for all, if it were decreed, or, if he knew that, from any circumstances whatever, a part only would be saved by him? Was not this shedding in vain that holy "blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel"? But when the final salvation of all men is admitted, this difficulty vanishes, and the death of Christ for all appears wise and economical. Is it strange then, that so many believe in universalism?

7. I shall offer but one reason more, and I have time barely to mention that. It is the resurrection of Christ from the dead. He died as the head of every man, and he was raised as the head of every man. His resurrection was a solemn pledge of the ultimate resurrection of the human race at large. He was raised that all men might be made alive in him to die no more. Hence he declared, "If I be lifted up from the earth I will draw all men unto me." So we are assured by an apostle that, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." But I must not enlarge. Such are a few of the reasons why some believe in the eventual salvation of all

men. Multitudes more might be adduced had we time, but these must suffice.

Let us now attend for a moment to the other side of this question. It is affirmed of this doctrine, that a vast majority of christians have always disbelieved and rejected it; and, it is, therefore, inferred that the doctrine itself is false and dangerous. From this circumstance also, we are solemnly urged to abjure our own faith in it—to give it up as a pleasing, but groundless and soul-destroying fiction. But we cannot do it. Verbally, perhaps, we might; but still, our hearts would falsify the language of our lips. They are full of it to the very core.

With the deep convictions of its truth resulting from the evidences just referred to, let what may happen, we cannot abandon our faith. Let heaven or hell come, we cannot do it. In the language of the patriot Adams, with reference to a great, though less momentous subject, “Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish,” we cannot give up our belief, that the “living God is truly the Saviour of all men.”

We could not do this if we would, and we would not do it if we could. It is too honorable to God, and too essential to the repose of man. The fact that a majority of christians have disbelieved this doctrine, we admit; but the inference drawn from this fact, that the



doctrine itself is therefore, false and dangerous, we utterly deny. We have another and more satisfactory way to dispose of it. We deny that the truth of a doctrine can be safely inferred from the number who embrace it, or, its falsehood, from the number who reject it. The rule is a dangerous one. If adopted, it would lead to the falsification of every revealed truth.

The great mass of mankind do not believe in the existence of the living and true God ; but shall we, therefore, infer that there is none, and all become atheists or idolaters? We read of those who "believed not the word of God," and who "rejected his statutes and commands." The pharisees also, and the whole body of the Jewish nation, "rejected the counsel of God against themselves." But what then? Must we hence infer that the word, statutes and counsels of Jehovah are all a tissue of falsehoods? Certainly not. They are true. They are "just and right altogether."

The objection then, so often brought against universalism, that but few, comparatively, have espoused it, has no weight in it. It is obviously destitute of a solid foundation. The same objection, substantially, may be urged against christianity itself, and the opinions of every sect in christendom, with as much propriety, as against those of universalists. Why then, should we be singled out and made the sole vic-

tims of this sweeping objection? We certainly ought not to be. It is treating us unjustly. But few of mankind, comparatively, have in any age embraced the christian system; and fewer still, the peculiar views of any particular denomination.

Hence, if the number of adherents to a religious faith be made the criterion of its truth, or its falsehood, our limitarian neighbors will be in a condition no less disastrous than ours. They will all be proved errorists and heretics. Their creeds will all become false and dangerous. Adopt this criterion, and there is no way to avoid these results. There are more heterodox than orthodox in the world—more catholics than protestants—more Mahometans than catholics; and more pagans than all the others put together.

Now, we are not prepared to adopt a rule, as the criterion of a true faith, at such an incalculable expense. We can account, satisfactorily, for the rejection of our sentiments without suspecting their truth; and, without calling in question the piety of those by whom they are rejected. We can do this, and still admit, as we are disposed to do, that limitarians, so far as they understand the matter, are honest, sincere and zealous christians. And now, if your patience will last, and I expected to tax it pretty largely when I began, but, if it will hold out a little longer, I will lay before you some reasons which

are satisfactory to myself, why universalism, the plain doctrine of the text, has been, and still is, rejected by the great mass of christian professors.

But before I proceed, I must be permitted to premise a few things in the negative. And,

1. It is not, because the doctrine itself is false. 2. It is not, because it is corrupt, or dangerous, or, in any degree, of a licentious and immoral tendency. 3. It is not, because this sentiment is not clearly and abundantly revealed in the holy scriptures. 4. Nor is it, because it has not been believed and advocated by men of unquestionable probity and superior talents, of profound erudition and science, sacred and profane ; and, who have maintained through life a high character for piety and every moral virtue. No, none of these things can be justly brought against our faith.

But in the affirmative I shall remark,

1. This doctrine has for a long time, and still does, require christians in general to give up their old opinions and habits. To embrace it, they must throw away a formulary which is venerable for its antiquity ; and, which is stamped with a high and adventitious value by the numbers, talents and stations of those who espouse and support it. Now but few, comparatively, in any age or country, possess moral courage

enough to take such a step. It is a sacrifice too mighty for their heroism.

Men, generally, have a natural and very strong attachment to whatever bears the impress of antiquity. The mere relics of other ages are so fascinating to thousands; and, exert such a power over their feelings, and even over their understandings, as to hold them spell-bound. They feel a high and almost boundless veneration for those time-honoured institutions and opinions which have defied the powers of innovation, and stood unshaken and unchanged through a long lapse of ages. They have an impression that whatever has endured a long time must be well founded and valuable.

It should also be remembered, that they are early trained to a disrelish for revolution, especially in matters of religion; and that they, therefore, shrink from any thing like innovation in the doctrines and discipline of their church, from the influence of a habit which has formed within them a sort of superinduced instinct. They feel towards an old religious opinion, though it seems to totter for want of a foundation, much as they do towards an old tenement which time has shattered: They are exceedingly uneasy at the thought of remaining longer in it; but still, they feel a sovereign disinclination, a chilling dread at the idea of quitting it.

The consideration that it was the home of an

honored father and mother—of a numerous family of children—and, of a long line of illustrious ancestors, renders the idea of abandoning such a residence still more painful, and it may disqualify them for forming the resolution to do it. Now, it is the same with people in regard to long-cherished religious opinions. To relinquish them requires a resolution which the great body of the community do not possess. This single consideration, therefore, of itself, accounts satisfactorily for the tenacity with which christians in general have hugged and cherished the doctrine of endless misery; and, for the unyielding stubbornness with which they have rejected and opposed that of the salvation of all men.

This doctrine requires them to give up old opinions, and customs, and associations, for new ones; and, to do this under peculiarly trying circumstances,—to turn their backs upon all, or nearly all, which their fathers held sacred in religion, and to take to their bosoms sentiments which they deemed false and destructive; and, which they spurned from them with deep abhorrence. Surely but few of our feeble race are sufficient for these things. Such a course seems to them like becoming parricides—of deliberately performing an act of filial expatriation. Is it strange then, that the multitudes should tremble and quail at the thought of taking such a step; and, that they should resolve to continue

wedded to their old religious sentiments, however absurd and contradictory they may be? No, it certainly is not. It would be almost a miracle were they to do otherwise.

2. A constitutional timidity, strengthened and rendered more sensitive by education and a habit of false thinking, has kept back vast numbers from embracing this truth. They startle at every sentiment in religion which the majority do not hold and approve. They are strongly suspicious that it is false—a dangerous, and, perhaps, a damnable heresy, and that it will be attended with evil, if not fatal consequences. In the language of the psalmist, “They are in great fear where no fear is.” And one thing which renders it exceedingly difficult, and, indeed, almost morally impossible for them to break the chains of mental slavery, is, they deem suspicion to be highly favourable to religious security and a growth in grace.

They have been trained up in the belief, and it has become a habit with them, that the apprehension of some remote and tremendous evil is essential to the safety of their souls; and, to their prosperity and progress in the divine life. Without something of the kind their religion, they think, would wither and die. Now such christians fear nothing so much as a religious faith which would diminish their forebodings of terrible disasters and miseries in the world to

come. They dare not, therefore, embrace the doctrine of God's love in the full extent of it—the salvation of all men, because it would cast out their fears, and they fear nothing so much as to have nothing to fear.

3. A natural love of ease and quiet keeps back a great many from the belief and profession of universalism. They are too indolent and irresolute in their general temperament, to investigate, or embrace, a system of religion which will awaken controversy and involve them in conflicts. They cannot endure the thought of digging for new truths, or, of fighting the battles necessary to defend them when they are acquired.

They do not, therefore, even grasp after higher and nobler views of God and his government than their predecessors entertained. They choose rather to take the opinions of those who have gone before them on trust, than to set up for themselves, or to form new associations. The profession of long-cherished sentiments subjects them to no contests, and involves them in no hazards. They can hold them in peace, and avow them with honour; and such a temptation they cannot withstand. All such will of course reject the doctrine of universal salvation. They will persist in their adherence to old dogmas and systems; and glide quietly on with the

current of popular opinion. We have, however, one comfort in this case, if no more. Such characters would be no addition to our real strength, should they range themselves in our ranks.

4. A spirit of religious ambition deters great numbers from embracing this doctrine. They are completely immersed in a love of distinction and personal aggrandizement; and this holds them in bondage to the partial schemes it has devised. They feel like spiritual patricians, and wish not to be blended with the herds of plebians with which they are surrounded. They want a religion which will allow them an elevation and notoriety becoming their imaginary rank; and which will enable them to say to their neighbors, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou." Now, such people cannot bring their minds to embrace universalism—a doctrine which humbles their pride, and levels in the dust all their ideal distinctions and towering hopes. But surely there is nothing in this case unfavorable to the truth of the doctrine itself.

5. A blind reverence for great names and high official stations, operates most powerfully upon a certain class of the community. It keeps them close to their heels, and eager to tread in each track of their feet. Are they churchmen? So are these people. Are they orthodox? So are they. Are they liberal?



These servile imitators are so likewise. Indeed, they are any thing or nothing, with respect to religion, as the wealthy and the great, among whom they live, happen to be at the time. Such characters certainly practice upon themselves a most degrading deception. It is painfully amusing to see it, or to think of it. They seem to make themselves believe it, if they belong to a religious congregation composed of the honourable and wealthy; and, especially, if they can sit near them in the house of worship, they themselves are honourable and wealthy likewise!

Alas! what a ludicrous, self-deception? Who that has the feelings of a man, or of a christian, will envy these miserable beings either their honour or their wealth? Surely no one. Still this deception is practiced by thousands. So it was in the days of Christ. "Have any of the pharisees, or of the rulers of the people believed on him?" This question was gravely propounded with respect to the doctrine of Jesus, and it appealed directly to its spirit of self-deception. Now all who foster this cringing disposition are truly objects of pity—of the deepest compassion; but it is certainly no argument against the truth of universalism that they do not embrace it.

6. The last reason I shall offer is, a fashionable dissimulation. A habit of religious dissem-

bling has become so prevalent in the world, that it is exceedingly difficult to tell what a man's real belief is. Hosts do not avow their deliberate convictions. They are zealous enough about religion, but sadly deficient in moral honesty. They believe one thing, while they profess and support another. You cannot determine the faith by the creed of those with whom they worship. This habit of dissembling, to a lamentable extent, I am sorry to say, has worked itself among many of the clergy. In the present day it is impossible to divine what the faith of my preachers is, or, whether they have any faith at all.

Like the scribes of old, too many in our times, we have reason to believe, among both clergymen and laymen, "love the praise of men more than the praise of God." At any rate, were every man's real belief written legibly upon his forehead and his back, our streets and churches on the Sabbath would make a very different appearance from what they now do, and one too, singularly amusing. Great numbers would see to have lost their course, and to have taken their seats in the wrong churches. But I have done. From the foregoing discussion, our opposites it is hoped, will see reasons for withholding their malediction; and if they still think us in error, feel that we have strong claims upon their tears, their pity, and their

prayers. To my lay brethren I can only say, "Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering." I close by repeating to my brethren in the ministry the solemn injunction in my text. "These things command and teach."

## SERMON 3.

BY MENZIES RAYNER.

ACTS xvii : 19, 20. May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is ? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears ; we would know, therefore, what these things mean.

ST. PAUL, in his travels to preach and propagate the gospel, had been conducted to *Athens*, which was one of the most celebrated cities in the world ; and the very seat of Grecian science and literature. Here he found the people wholly given to idolatry. Here also he met with Jews, and devout persons, with whom, in their synagogue and in the market, he disputed daily concerning Jesus of Nazareth. And here he was encountered by certain philosophers of the Epicurians and stoicks. And some said “ What will this babbler say ? ” Others thought him to be “ a setter forth of strange gods ; because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.” And they took him, and brought unto Areopagus—the place where the Athenians held their supreme court of justice. Here they

wished the apostle to give them a particular illustration of his doctrine, which, to them, was altogether new and strange. "May we know (said they) what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know, therefore, what these things mean."

With this request the apostle was not backward to comply. He had not hastily adopted opinions—or inconsiderately embraced a system of religion, of which he could give no satisfactory account,—which shunned investigation, or which he thought incapable of being defended. He was himself, thoroughly convinced and satisfied of the truth and excellence of the christian religion, and so anxious was he to promulgate the gospel doctrine of grace and salvation for all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, that he *gloried* only, in the cross of Christ, and determined, (to use his own language) "to know nothing—save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

The apostle therefore, gladly embraces the opportunity offered, and standing in the midst of Mars' hill, among the judges in the Areopagus, he undauntedly delivers his testimony, in a most argumentative and pathetic discourse—a condensed account of which, together with the effect which it had upon the audience, is given by the historian, in the succeeding part of the chapter.

He reasons with the Athenians, in the first

place, upon the principles of *natural* religion—exhibits those great and fundamental truths which are taught by, and justly inferred from the works of creation and providence—shows the absurdity of their superstitious veneration of numerous imaginary deities—the work of their own hands—“graven by art and man’s device.” He directs their contemplation to the true and consistent foundation of religious worship and adoration—the ONE only, and ever living God. The “God that made the world, and all things therein”—Who is “Lord of heaven and earth”—and who therefore cannot dwell, or be shut up, “in temples made with hands,”—who needeth nothing of his creatures, “seeing he giveth to all, life, and breath and all things.”

He next declares to them that this one God, “hath made of one blood, all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” That He had determined the times—and the bounds of their habitation—and that he is intimately present with *all* of them, in every place—because in him they all “live and move and have their being.” Agreeably to which necessary and obvious truth, he quotes the following saying of one of their own Poets—“*For we are also his offspring.*” From this heathen confession or declaration, which the apostle recognizes as an undeniable fact, and a truth, of all others, the most interesting, he thus reasons—That “as

we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."

Such ideas of the Supreme Being, must only be imputed to the grossest ignorance and stupidity; an ignorance which cannot be justified by any circumstances in which mankind can be placed, and which are condemned by the bare light of nature, and the simple dictates of human reason. Yet the apostle says, "The times of this ignorance God winked at—passed over—or suffered to remain for a long time for purposes, doubtless, which his own infinite wisdom saw best. But *now*," continues the apostle, "commandeth all men every where to repent:" and he assigns, as a reason—"Because he hath appointed a day, or, period of time"—(and which, in the dissemination of the gospel, had already commenced) "in which he will judge"—that is, *rule and govern* "the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained"—the man *Christ Jesus*—the appointed Mediator and Redeemer;—"whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

Such was the reasoning of St. Paul with the Athenian idolators—such his representation of the character, disposition, and purposes of God, and his government of mankind, in their different nations and generations, and under the dif-

ferent dispensations of his providence and grace.

But the principal subject of the apostle's preaching was "Jesus and the Resurrection." On this sublime topic he dwelt with *rapture*, and with peculiar emphasis, as the ultimate and perfect display of the wisdom of the divine counsels, and of the riches of divine grace and universal benevolence. And it was this part of his preaching, in particular, that was looked upon by the Athenians to be so new and strange, which they found it so difficult to understand—and of which they were desirous of a fuller explanation—"He seemeth (said they) to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection"—"May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? for thou bringest certain strange things to our ears."

To the Athenians, the apostle's doctrine concerning Jesus and the resurrection was indeed *new* and *strange*, the like to which they had never heard before, and the effect which it produced upon the audience was various, as might be expected; (for it is by no means unusual that the same discourse, is very differently received, and makes opposite impressions upon the minds of different persons; owing, doubtless, very much to different tempers, and different habits of thinking and reasoning, and also to different preconceived opinions and prejudices.) Thus the histo-



rian states in reference to St. Paul's preaching—"Some mocked, and others said, we will hear thee again of this matter."

It is supposed that the apostle did not finish his intended discourse, or say all that he would have said, had he not been interrupted. He said enough however concerning Christ and the resurrection to convince *some*, of the excellence, and the divine authority of the christian doctrine; among whom was "Dionesius, the Areopagite," supposed to be one of the judges of the court, "and a woman named Damaris, and some others." "So Paul departed from among them."

Thus we have taken a brief notice of the apostle's proceeding at Athens, and the treatment he received; and have given an analysis of his preaching, and the doctrines he taught. We shall now recur to the passage which was first read to you as the text, and shall apply it to after ages, and occurrences in the *christian church*; and especially to events, proceedings, and circumstances, which are taking place in the present time. "May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is; for thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore, what these things mean?"

The apostle's doctrine, then, was thought to be a *new* doctrine; and to the Athenians, it *was*

so, in *reality*. They had heard of Epicturus and Zeno, of Socrates and Plato, and other renowned sages, and their different systems of philosophy and religion; and their mythology taught them the names and exploits of their deified heroes and heroines, and gods and goddesses, which they had in great numbers, with various titles and divers supposed powers. But Jesus of Nazareth, as described by the apostle, was to them, a title and character wholly unknown before, and the wonders wrought, and the doctrines taught by him, were altogether new and strange.

And here we would premise a fact, the correctness of which will not be questioned by this audience,—that christianity, as exhibited both by the Evangelists and apostles, and contained in the gospel revelation, is the *truth of God*—a full declaration of his will and his purposes concerning mankind, and a complete delineation of their *present* condition—their duties, their privileges, and their prospects, and of their future and *eternal destiny*: and hence the solemn caution, given to every man, not to add to, nor diminish aught, from this revelation.

It is however, a melancholy fact, that, soon after the age of the apostles, the christian religion became greatly degenerated. Nay, before the conclusion of that age, the pure doctrines of the gospel began to be corrupted by the

doctrines and commandments of *men*. Hence, to the Gallatians, the apostle says—"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ."

This corrupting spirit and influence, increased and spread more and more; mingling human and secular power and policy, with the simple principles of the gospel,—perverting its doctrines and precepts, and corrupting its system of government and worship, by numerous and unauthorized rites and ceremonies,—by forming ecclesiastical constitutions, enacting canons, and establishing long catalogues of articles of faith, and enjoining the belief of them, upon the penalty of excommunication in *this* world, and eternal damnation in the *world to come*;—until finally, the whole christian world became subject to the usurped authority, civil and ecclesiastical, of his,—presumptuously, and blasphemously styled, "Lord, God, the Pope!" To this tyrannical power and dominion, it is supposed the apostle prophetically alludes, in his description of the "man of sin—the son of perdition—who, (says he,) opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in

the temple of God, showing himself that he is God!"

For about a thousand years the papal Church with the Pope at its head (having obtained it by the most subtle and nefarious arts, and persevering efforts) held this usurped and unrighteous control over the understandings and consciences of the people; immuring them in worse than Egyptian darkness and bondage—withholding from them the light of God's word—taking away this "key of knowledge,"—and thundering the most terrible anathema's—even eternal exclusion from the kingdom of heaven, and the sufferings of the pains of hell forever, to any who should presume to call in question the divine, and supreme authority of the *Pope*—the pretended successor of St. Peter; or who should refuse to yield implicit faith, and unqualified obedience to the dogma's and requisitions, however absurd, which from time to time were set up and enjoined.

During these dark ages, what ecclesiastical domination,—what hypocrisy, avarice, debauchery, cruelty, and all manner of "spiritual wickedness in high places," reigned triumphant! and what gross ignorance, superstition, and idolatry; what degrading corruption, and abject vassalage prevailed, every where, among the people! What absurd and preposterous doctrines, rites, and usages, have been introduced and perpetua-

ted, in that, falsely claimed, *pure and infallable church*, from the (still venerated, though utterly unfounded) doctrine of the Trinity, and of vicarious suffering and atonement, to that of transubstantiation,—priestly absolution, and extreme unction—worship of angels, and canonized saints,—(especially the virgin Mary—to whom they offer more prayers than to the Almighty) the doctrine of *purgatory*, and of the necessity of prayers for the deliverance of souls out of it;—together with the still retained, and still supposed highly important doctrine of *fallen angels*, an omnipresent *devil*, of great power, and vastly successful in his opposition to God, and to the reign of the Messiah—and lastly the doctrine of *endless sufferings* and torments in a future state, for a large portion of mankind?

Such, for a long time, have been, and such still are, the doctrines, rites, and practices of *popery*, or the Romish church: And doubtless, its deluded votaries,—many of them, have full confidence in those traditionary doctrines, and superstitions. They verily believe that their priests have full authority—derived from the Pope, to grant them plenary absolution—even, (if he chooses) for all their sins, past, present and future;—that he can open to them, the gate of heavenly glory, in another world, or close it against them at pleasure—that the virgin Mary can be prevailed upon to intercede effec-

tually for them, or for their departed friends, in purgatory. They believe in the divine efficacy of *extreme unction*, as it is called, administered in the last hour of expiring life, and they believe also—(contrary to their own reason and senses,) they believe, because so taught by their priest—that the *wafer*, which they receive and eat in the sacrament—after being set apart and consecrated by the officiating minister, is the real, identical *body of Christ*, which suffered on the cross 1800 years ago.

We pity such ignorance, and we wonder at such superstitious notions, and absurd imaginations. But it is worthy of serious inquiry whether there are not, among *protestant* sects of professing christians, doctrines and practices, equally unfounded, irrational and superstitious; and *some*, which, in substance, are very near allied to those which we have just noticed. Let it not be thought invidious if we proceed to notice some instances of this similarity. Is it not still thought, by *many* that *protestant* priests also, possess an influence and energy very nearly resembling the power of *absolution*? Why else are persons called upon, in public meetings, in seasons of what are called revivals, and entreated to come forward to what are called, the *anxious seats*, that the minister may pray for them? which proceeding, they are told, will almost certainly result in their conversion, and

obtaining a hope, and in their salvation from eternal burnings!—Hence the exhortations addressed, especially to the young, on those occasions, “Come forward to the anxious seats—if you wish for salvation—if you would escape hell, and be made heirs of heaven—O, come to the anxious seats—come round the altar—that God’s ministers may pray for you.”

If you will excuse a short digression, I will here make one inquiry—Do you read of such *anxious seats* being provided in the days of Christ or his apostles? or of any such accompaniments to their preaching or public worship, as have lately prevailed, and been practised at four days, or protracted meetings? If not, is not their expediency more than questionable?

The doctrine of the trinity, and of vicarious suffering, is still held by the greater part of protestant sects; which teaches them to believe, that one infinite, eternal person of this trinity died on the cross, to placate the infinite wrath of *another*, equally infinite person, and render him favourably disposed towards mankind. Again; If the doctrine of *extreme unction* is not exactly the same, in *name* and *form*, among protestants, as with the papists, yet in *substance* there is evidently but a shade of difference; for it appears still to be thought that the prayers of a priest, at the last hours of life—especially if

procured at the dying person's request, will, very hopefully be effectual, in saving the immortal spirit; not only from the pains of *purgatory*, but from that endless punishment which he is told is his *just* desert; and which, but for that timely ministerial service, or invocation, he would inevitably have been condemned to suffer.\*

And although popish *infallability* is not claimed in express terms, yet it appears to be an opinion, which prevails to a considerable extent, and which the clergy are very much disposed to encourage, that to be a member of an *orthodox church*, in full faith and communion, if it does not infallably *secure* a person's eternal salvation, it, however places him or her, in a pretty *safe* state, in reference to another world.

The doctrine of fallen angels—a personal malignant devil, and endless hell torments, are held in *common* by Roman Catholics, and by all that are considered *evangelical* churches and denom-

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\*We are far from being opposed to ministerial visitations of the sick—praying with them, &c. We highly approve of it. Not, however, to alarm the minds of the sick and dying with fearful apprehensions of divine wrath and vengeance in a future state; but to assure them of God's unchanging favor and goodness—to exhibit, in high relief, the inestimable hopes and consolations of the gospel of peace and salvation; that, as the poet says—

“Despair and anguish,” may “flee the struggling soul,  
Comfort come down, the trembling wretch to raise,  
And his last, faltering accents whisper—PRAISE.”



inations, among protestants. No one, it is thought, can be a true orthodox christian, unless he has full faith in the devil and hell!

At the era of the Reformation, under Luther, Calvin and others, it is certain that many gross impositions, and shameful abuses, long practised in the papal church, were detected, exposed, and reformed; and many idle superstitions,—unauthorized rites, and useless ceremonies, were relinquished and discarded. And in *that* case the *reformers*, like the apostle in the text, were accused, by the then generally supposed *orthodox* priesthood, of bringing certain *strange things* to the ears of the people, and of teaching *new* doctrines, contrary to the long established faith of the church—subversive of all proper ecclesiastical authority, and of all order, morals, and religion. The catholic clergy exerted all their authority, and all their influence, to keep the people from going to hear those *heretical preachers*, or reading any of their writings; telling them that *theirs* was the only true religion, handed down from Christ and his apostles—that if they departed from the faith and government of *that* church, they would incur the awful displeasure and malediction of God, and Christ, and the virgin Mary, and of all the saints and angels in heaven—that the tremendous sentence of *ex-communication* must be passed upon them, which would be ratified in heaven, and seal

their eternal damnation, beyond the hope of remedy!

My brethren, is there any thing like this transacted in the christian world in *our* day? Of this we shall now more particularly inquire. We have not time to trace the history of events in christendom from the era of the Reformation down to the present period. We will come immediately to the times in which we live, and to the religious movements and operations of the present day.

It is evidently, at present, a season of great excitement, and of extraordinary exertion; and, thank God, of great religious inquiry and investigation also; which is always alike *fatal* to *error* and *superstition*, *intolerance* and *hypocrisy*, and favorable to the cause of truth, and to the genuine, rational, and liberal principles and practice of christianity,—the pure, generous, impartial, and heavenly religion of the gospel.

But is there any doctrine propagated among us at the present time, which, like that preached by St. Paul at Athens, is thought to be *new* and *strange*? Yes,—of this you cannot be ignorant; and you anticipate me, and say, it is the doctrine of **UNIVERSALISM**. True, my respected hearers, it is so; this doctrine is looked upon by many to be almost as new and strange, as was the doctrine of “Jesus and the resurrection” to the Athenians. Whether it is, in reality a *new* doc-

trine, will be an after inquiry. But as to its *promulgation*, to any considerable extent, at least, during several preceding ages, and also the age in which we live, until very lately,—we acknowledge it to be, comparatively, a new doctrine.

A very *different*, and a very *contrary* doctrine, has extensively prevailed—even the doctrine of God's everlasting hatred and wrath, and his fixed and unalterable determination, according to his own good pleasure, to punish and torment a great part of his own intelligent creation—his own *offspring*, to all eternity ! We think *this* is the strangest—the most unaccountable—and the most absurd doctrine that ever was promulgated, or that ever was proposed to the faith of rational beings. And so it would certainly appear to all, were it not that people have been familiarized to it from childhood—have been trained up in it, as a necessary part of education—as a most important and salutary truth of the gospel revelation—the revelation of “good tidings of great joy!”

The early seceders from the church of Rome, appear to have considered it unnecessary to inquire concerning the validity of *this* doctrine ; the doctrine of endless hell punishment ; but took for granted that it was correct. And here, certainly, is a *strange thing*—they rejected the catholic doctrine of *purgatory*, as an unfounded superstition, but retained *that*, which is a thousand times more inconsistent, incredible, and abhor-

rent—the doctrine of *eternal torments*. *This* doctrine of popery, which the clergy of that church found convenient, to keep the people in awe, and subject them to their domination and avarice, the Reformers appeared willing to admit, and receive from them as true ! !

The same cruel, and most irrational doctrine, has since (we are persuaded, without much examination, or reflection) been admitted as correct, by most denominations of professing christians. This alone passes current, at *present*, as true orthodoxy ; whilst the doctrine of God's impartial, universal, and unchanging love—issuing in the final salvation, holiness and happiness of all mankind, is considered a new and strange doctrine, and a most alarming, demoralizing, and dangerous heresy ! The common opinion appears to be, that for a person to hope and believe that all his neighbours and fellow-creatures will be *saved* as well as *himself*, and none of them, (to borrow the language of the Catechism,) suffer “the pains of hell forever,” is a most fatal error, and sufficient to seal his own eternal condemnation !

*Universalism* then, is said to be a *new* and *strange* doctrine, and exceedingly pernicious. But who say this ? Are they those who have carefully examined it, in its foundation, its superstructure, and in all its bearings, its connections, and its result, so that they fully understand it ?

We think not. On the contrary, it is commonly found, that those who speak the most against it, and are its most violent opposers, are such as are very *ignorant* of it, who have taken no pains to investigate the subject, and who condemn it at random, unheard, and without examination.

I hope I shall not be considered presumptuous, or uncharitable, when I say, (what I expect you will all allow to be true,) that the greatest opposers of the doctrine of universal grace, and of those who preach and propagate it, are our brethren of the *orthodox clergy*. They with one consent, denounce the doctrine, and all who espouse it ; and even *excommunicate* persons from their churches, however moral and upright they may be in other respects, if they shall dare to confess their faith in it. And we expect, as people gain more confidence, so as, without restraint, to avow their real sentiments, this business of excommunication will increase upon their hands ; for it is well ascertained, from private acknowledgements, that there are *many* universalists in orthodox churches of different denominations.

But to return.—Concerning these grave and reverend opposers of universalism, there is one of two things which we are obliged to believe, viz.—either that they are *unacquainted* with the doctrine, or else that they are not *honest*. We should choose to believe the former ; but it is certain that either *one* or the *other* of these prop-

ositions is true ; because they generally, and almost constantly, *misrepresent* the doctrine ; and hold up in the place of it, to the view of their hearers and readers, opinions and sentiments as held by us which we neither teach nor believe, any more than they. Now we have no objection to their opposing, and pointing out the errors of our doctrine, if they find them, and believe them to be such. Nay, it is their duty to do it. But let them do it fairly and honestly ; not by misrepresentation and abuse, not by calling us infidels, deists, messengers of satan, &c. ; unless they show by proof and sound argument, that we justly merit such a charge. *We* too, very freely point out, what we believe to be, errors in other systems ; but we do it by an appeal to the scriptures, in contrast with their avowed principles, as contained in their own articles and confessions of faith ; and we call upon the people to *hear, examine, and judge for themselves*. But is this the course pursued by the opposers of universalism ? Do the clergy advise their people to acquaint themselves with the doctrine—and carefully to consider and weigh the evidence and arguments, both *for* and against it ; that they may form a deliberate and enlightened opinion, and make a judicious decision in the case ?

No, my hearers, you well know this is not the course taken. On the contrary, the clergy

declare the doctrine to be *new* and *strange*, and to be utterly false and ruinous,—wholly inconsistent and contradictory, and without any foundation in the word of God:—and they wish the people to take *their* word for all this, without further inquiry, and with entire confidence in *their* infallability. Nay, they admonish, and warn them, not to look into the doctrine at all—never to allow themselves to listen to one of its preachers, nor go within the sound of his voice; and never to read any books, pamphlets, or papers in favor of it, or which go to support and defend it.

And in this, we acknowledge, they discover much prudence, or rather, art and cunning; for they well know that if people hear, and read, and examine the doctrine for themselves, they will find it to be very different from what they often hear it described and represented by its enemies: they know that they will find out that universalism is not atheism or deism;—nor infidelity, in any of its forms or grades. True, they will not find it neither, to be Calvinism, nor arminianism, nor orthodoxy, as that term is now generally understood and applied. But still they will find, (as on due examination, has been uniformly acknowledged,) that the doctrine of impartial and universal grace and salvation, has much *reason*, and very much *scripture* in its fa-

vour; and that it is founded in the eternal principles of goodness and benevolence, and in the all-subduing—all-conquering energies of infinite power, and of divine immutable love.

And now, my brethren, we inquire, Is *this* in reality, a new and strange doctrine? Is it a new and strange declaration, that the Supreme Being—the Creator of all things, possesses *almighty power*? and that he will do all his pleasure; and that his pleasure is, “that all shall be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth?” Is it a new and strange doctrine that “there is *one*” God, and but one?—For in relation to *this* point, universalists are strictly *unitarians*, believing, with them, in the simple unity of the divine Being—God the Father.—But we stop not here; we believe that this one God is infinitely *good*—good to all—and that he will be so *forever*.

We inquire then further—Is it a new and strange doctrine to christians, that there is not only one God—but that there is also “one *Mediator* between God and men—the *man* Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time?”—that he “tasted death for every man,” and is “the propitiation for the sins of the whole world?” And is it a new and strange doctrine, that “it pleased the Father that in him (the Son—the Mediator) should all fulness dwell; and having made peace



through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven?" Is it a new doctrine that it is God's "good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him"? Is it new and strange to your ears, that "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"—that "Christ must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet"—that "death, the last enemy shall be destroyed"—and that when all things shall be subdued to God, "then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all—when death being "swallowed up in victory"—united, universal, and eternal thanks shall be ascribed to God, "who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"—Is it—But we must stop.—We could proceed very long with such inquiries, founded upon express declarations of scripture, which go the whole length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the doctrine of universalism—which is the doctrine of the "unsearchable riches of Christ."

We ask then, Is the doctrine which is so clearly recognized—so expressly declared in the holy scriptures of divine inspiration—which is

so consonant with the most exalted ideas of the character and attributes of God—so agreeable to the dictates of reason, and to the best feelings, affections, and wishes of mankind—and of all benevolent beings: does *this* doctrine deserve to be considered, and called a *new* and *strange* doctrine, and a pernicious and deadly heresy? No—surely no. It is as old as the promise made to man in paradise—which in substance was renewed to the patriarch Abraham, and which has been confirmed and declared “by the mouth of all God’s holy prophets since the world began.”

And now,—that this heavenly, and soul cheering doctrine of good tidings, is spreading and prevailing in every direction; and, to use the figurative and elegant language of the prophet—is causing “the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose,”—distilling and diffusing its delightful fragrance—Now, that it is making its way to the understandings and consciences of men, and commending itself to their reason and judgment, and to their best wishes and hopes—And now too, that it is proving so mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds,—casting down imaginations—spoiling ecclesiastical principalities and powers, and successfully warring against “spiritual wickedness in high places.”—Seeing these movements and

operations—too palpable to be concealed,—do any inquire and desire to know of us “what these things mean?”

We readily answer—we unhesitatingly declare what we believe—what we are fully persuaded, these things mean—viz, That the day of *judgment* has come! that very day of judgment referred to by the Apostle, in the close of his discourse in the Areopagus at Athens—even the *day*—the period—in which God will *judge*—that is, *rule*, and *govern* the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained—not by the servile principle of fear and terror—but by the all-subduing influence—the all-conquering energy of ineffable compassion and kindness—and almighty LOVE—revealed and manifested in the gospel of Jesus. And of this glorious, triumphant, and universal judgment—OR REIGN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, by Christ, God “hath given assurance unto all men—in that he hath raised him from the dead”—“set him at his own right hand”—“given him a name which is above every name, that, in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” Amen—Hallelujah—Praise the Lord.

## SERMON 4.

BY THOMAS JONES;

### *The Gospel Ministry.*

MATT. IX. 37, 38.—The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few ; pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest.

It is said in the verse preceding the text, that when Jesus saw the multitudes who attended to hear him, he was moved with compassion for them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. In this care and sympathy, which Jesus ever showed towards the destitute and afflicted, we discover in our divine Lord those peculiar virtues which should insure for him the highest respect and the best affections of the human heart.

The account given in the context of the needy multitudes who flocked to hear the teachings of Jesus, we may safely use in a moral application,—to show that they were faint in respect to their minds as well as their bodies; and that they were unsettled as to any fixed senti-

ment which could give them real and permanent comfort. Nor had they any guide who cared for them, so as to lead them into the right paths except the Lord Jesus. He is emphatically the good shepherd who gave his life for the sheep, and as such, he had compassion on the famished multitudes.

It is worthy of notice, in this place, that Jesus pronounced a woe against the teachers of his day—the standing order in the Jewish church—saying, Woe unto you, lawyers, for ye have taken away the keys of knowledge. Ye enter not in yourselves; and those that were entering in, ye hindered. If it be asked, how the Jewish teachers did these things? the answer is easy. By their traditions they took away the true method of interpreting the scriptures; gave the people a wrong understanding of the prophecies, and thereby hindered them from entering the gospel kingdom. A proverb similar to the above, was uttered by the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xxiii, ver. 1—Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, saith the Lord. This woe was pronounced against them because they scattered and destroyed the sheep; nor was this all,—they withheld from them the true bread, and forbid their feeding in God's field of free grace.

Very suddenly our Lord changed the similitude of sheep without a shepherd, to that of a

plenteous harvest fully ripe, where there were but few laborers to gather it in. Amongst all the masters in Israel, there was none found to *gather* the people; to lead them, doctrinally, into the rich scriptural comforts mentioned by the holy prophets of Israel.

In prosecuting the subject of this discourse, I will speak

1. Of the plenteous harvest.
2. Of the few laborers.
3. Of the exhortation found in the text—  
“pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest.”

1. The plenteous harvest represented the great multitudes of people which Jesus saw as sheep without a shepherd,—having, indeed, a spirit of inquiry; but as yet in ignorance. And as Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day and forever, we believe the ignorant multitudes have his compassion still, and that he shows them mercy. In the parable of the tares and the wheat which Jesus put forth, the harvest is said to mean the end of the world, i. e. age or dispensation. The end of the world referred to the *time* when the tares should be gathered out of the wheat, and be burned. This was accomplished in the destruction of the Jewish hierarchy, temple and city. But in the text, reference is not had to *time* in particular, by the

same metaphor (viz. harvest,) used; but to the plenteous harvest of the people; of the common people, who heard Jesus preach gladly. In reference to such people, Jesus, seeing them flock to hear him, said, "The fields are white already to harvest." Though very ignorant, from lack of information, they were disposed to inquire, and to ask, What is truth? This is the first step towards obtaining a knowledge of the truth. If people will but inquire, they are promised all necessary aid from on high, to assist them in entering the gospel kingdom. These ignorant people, in question, were a part of the plenteous harvest, which God had designed to gather into the knowledge of life eternal. Mankind at large, the equal offspring of God, were given, being at first, earthly and mortal, with the full design in God to be ultimately gathered by him into the celestial state, as his "crop" and "plenteous harvest," sowed by him in the earth. This was "the grace given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began."

That God, the Creator, expected such a harvest from the beginning, we may conclude from what Moses wrote, Gen. v. 1, 2, "This is the book of the generations of Adam: in the day that God created man, in the likeness of God created he him. Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created,"

From the first, God entertained a design in relation to the posterity of Adam, whom he created in his own image. The children of the promise will, indeed, in the resurrection, make a plenteous harvest! They are to be, for multitude, as the stars of heaven, and as the sands upon the sea-shore, innumerable. All the children of Adam are also the children of God in Christ Jesus. The heathen are to be his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth his possession, in due form; and though many of them may be ignorant, as were the scattered sheep of the house of Israel, in the days of Jesus Christ upon earth, yet are they his harvest, and are now being gathered in by the gospel dispensation, to the knowledge of divine truth by an arranged process. And at last they shall be all gathered into the personal possession of immortal glory in the celestial image.

Having, therefore, such a wide field before us, such a plenteous harvest of our race to gather, doctrinally, into the hope of eternal life, we are not afraid to preach the gospel freely and indefinitely, lest we should preach it to reprobates. No, indeed! for we do not believe God has any reprobates. "All souls are mine; as the soul of the Father, so also the soul of the son is mine." Ezek. xviii. 4. God is the Father of all; Jesus has died for all; the gospel promise of great joy was made for all people; and the com-



mission of every christian preacher requires him to preach the good tidings to "every creature" in "all the world." We therefore proclaim to all the ever blessed message of grace and salvation.

2. I was to speak of the laborers being few.

The laborers in this harvest are represented as gathering the multitudes of mankind into the hope of eternal life. The laborers in this harvest by their doctrinal instructions, gather mankind into the hope of eternal life in their own souls. We may observe, that the work of these laborers is, *not* to scatter; not to destroy; not to divide, except from error. The laborers being few, refers to the time in which Jesus lived upon earth, when there were no instructors, in real divine truth, in the house of Israel, sitting in the seat of Moses. And Jesus predicted that a time would come amongst his professed followers, under the christian name, when their teachers would take from them the bridegroom (doctrinally,) and that they should then mourn. Accordingly, when he was interrogated why his disciples did not fast? he said, How can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them; then shall they fast in those days. Such days have been; and such days are even now experienced by many. The laborers in

the gospel harvest who do not tread down, destroy and scatter, are but few compared with the great mass around them. Few profess that Jesus will *save* all that are found in a morally lost state. Yea some who see the propriety of this truth are afraid to confess it before men. Even Chauncy and Huntingdon, such was the state of public sentiment in their day, wrote it only by the midnight lamp, leaving their writings or their names to come to the light only after they were beyond the reach of the hatred and scorn of the world. But we, in this day, have no just occasion of fear. We utter this truth before the world, and publish it under the broad light of the noon-day sun.

The work of these laborers in question, in the text, is to gather, not to destroy any. For who could bear to think that Jesus taught his disciples to pray for laborers to help destroy mankind!

We will here take some notice of these few laborers' work; which I will do by referring to another passage. John iv. 36. He that reapeth receiveth wages, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true—one soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that on which you bestowed no (prior) labor. Other men labored (at the husbandry,) and ye are entered into their labors; to reap the crop which they

sowed. God sowed men in the earthly state: and the apostles were sent to gather mankind, doctrinally, into the heavenly state, by the pledge given of immortality in Christ's resurrection. For such a doctrinal harvest of hope, many appeared to be ready at the time of Christ and his apostles.

Mankind are so constituted, that they are always looking out for something better than they possess.

“Hope springs eternal in the human breast;  
Man never *is*, but always *to be* blest.”

For such an enjoyment by faith, man was prepared from the first by his Maker; and was made capable, also, of being baptized by the Holy Spirit, by a new constitution, from mortal to immortal—from earthly to heavenly. “We are God's workmanship.” But the change of constitution, from mortal to immortal, from earthly to heavenly, doth not take place in this world; but in the world to come. All the change wrought in any in this world, is no more than a moral or spiritual change of sentiments and affections, and conduct, when found erroneous and immoral. For if any, like Timothy, know the truth of the holy Scriptures from childhood, they never needed any change of sentiment. And if their affections and conduct are directed and influenced by their hope, they need no moral change. All they need, is to

grow in the knowledge of the grace of God, and in moral purity and excellence. For believers are still mortal and earthly while in this life, subject to the same passions and temptations as other men. They have all the natural tendencies and feelings common to human nature. But they are called to govern themselves by their faith, upon earth, in word and deed, so that they do no evil to any, in any sense.

The "other men" that labored, into whose labors the apostles of Christ entered, were the holy prophets, who searched what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them, did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. The apostles, who saw the Son of God in flesh, were more highly favored under their dispensation, than the prophets were under theirs. So said their Lord—"Blessed are your eyes, for they see ; and your ears, for they hear ; for I say unto you, that many righteous men and kings have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them ; and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

The prophets predicted, what the apostles saw fulfilled as witnesses, and preached to the world as such. They preached, as their eyes were opened, the unsearchable riches of Christ ; that God was no respecter of persons ; that the Messiah was God's salvation unto the ends of

the earth ; that the forgiveness of sin was preached as wide as the world ; that as certainly as we have borne the image of the earthly here, we shall bear the heavenly image in eternity !

Will this developement of free grace be objected to, as removing the restraint of fear, arising from the danger of endless misery ? Let me ask, wherefore did not all the fear of the past ages of the papacy, correct the morals of those ages ? For, surely, mankind were much more wicked in those ages, than they now are. Witness the history of the tyrannies, massacres, barbarities, of the men of those times ;—their rage, lust and general licentiousness. The doctrine of a purgatory and of a possible eternity of torments in fire, did not sanctify them. History bears a sorry testimony to the moral efficacy of such a faith, in those ages when that faith was the most strong and general amongst mankind.

Let mankind become fully persuaded, that God, their Creator, is all love and goodness ; yea, and that all his chastisements for iniquity are inflicted with a benevolent design ; and surely such a noble hope will break up in them the dominant force of temptation, and moral rectitude will become their delight ; and iniquity of every kind will become their abhorrence. So doth the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, teach to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and influence all, to whom this grace appears, to live

righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world. We believe and preach, the unbounded, universal grace of God, to preserve ourselves and others from all evil deeds. Grace, which saith to every sinner,—“Thy sins be forgiven thee,” also enjoins, “go and sin no more !”

While we think God has implacable, vengeful wrath, towards the sinner, so long shall we think ourselves justified in hating implacably such as we may deem worthy of our displeasure,—hating their persons for the sake of their deeds. But, according to the New Testament, no man's person is to be the object of hatred, though his deeds may be abhorred, and his person, if need so require, be secured by the arm of the law, to restrain his malignancy. Indeed, there is no possibility of forgiving enemies—of rendering blessing for cursing—but upon the principle of God's infinite, universal grace and love. For while we think, that there is one creature, in any part of God's creation, which he hates, so long shall we feel licensed to select for ourselves some proper object of vengeance or abhorrence amongst our race. But who does not know that this practice would be in direct opposition to the obvious doctrines and positive precepts of the gospel ? But when we become fully persuaded, that

“ We cannot go  
Where universal love smiles not around,”

then we shall feel ourselves reproved for hatred, if we have it ; and shall feel disposed to surrender ourselves up to the truth of free grace, to be governed morally by it in word and in deed. And the enlarged compassion and good will, which we feel for all mankind, will not make us abhor iniquity less, but will inspire us the more with the love of holiness.

3. I was to speak of the exhortation found in the text, “ Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest; that he would send forth laborers into his harvest.”

To pray to, or petition, Almighty God, who is infinitely wise and good, to do any thing for ourselves or others, may have the appearance of inconsistency at first, in the minds of some who have thought freely for themselves upon subjects. For it is a given point, that God, our Maker, is too wise to need any direction from us, and too good to need any excitement from us. And, indeed, if we think we know better than God, what is best for ourselves, so that we can direct him what is most suitable to be done for us, or others, it is our folly. And if we think we can move him by our requests, to be more gracious towards us, more careful of us, or more kind to us, than he is in and of himself, it surely is our ignorance to think so.

Nevertheless, God indulges mankind, while in this mortal state of trouble and suffering, to

pray or request him, for themselves and others, in subordination to his infinite wisdom and goodness. So we say, prayer is an indulgence God has granted man, for his gratification and comfort upon earth. In this view of prayer, it is desire, or desire brought into words ; and is no more in its kind, than hunger and thirst are in their kind, preparatory to our receiving food and drink with zest. And we know that the God who made the earth fertile, in order to the production of the sustenance necessary for man, also constituted our craving appetites to receive it. So prayer, or the spirit of prayer, is desire planted in man by his Maker, roused to activity by circumstances. Prayer is desire, secret or social.

The disciples were privileged to indulge and cherish such desires, which would invigorate them with fervency in their work. And such desires in us now, in this day, would stir us up to greater zeal and circumspection in religion.

The exhortation of the text suggests the necessity of such laborers, because "the harvest is plenteous." Mankind are ripe and ready to receive the information which the true gospel gives, if not found under the influence of bigotry and prejudice of another gospel—a gospel which seeks righteousness, as it were, by works of righteousness done by us. God who made the eye to see, hath given the light to furnish vision. And he who gave man the power of believing



with joy in his name, upon knowing his character hath also arranged that there should be messengers of grace and truth to give such information as shall call out the heart into the act of confidence in God. So "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," which word reveals God in his true character.

For this purpose laborers are employed, as zealous friends of the gospel, to describe its nature to the people, to be "helpers of their joy." A pure and lofty zeal for the gospel must carry them into the work ; and the same zeal must inspire them to action. They are the servants of God, in Christ, and not of men. Their care is, not to please men, but to preach the true gospel of God our Saviour.

But, it is inquired, why cannot mankind, who have the gospel—the New Testament in their hands—do very well without any such preachers ? They may, indeed, if they have themselves the light of evangelists. But upon the same grounds we may ask—Why cannot the community, being taught to read, do without teachers of any science whatever ? arithmetic, navigation, philosophy, astronomy, geography, music, &c. ; for all these sciences are now written out and explained in books. Here it may be said, the instructions and explanations of teachers expedite information. So Gospel laborers expedite moral information, if they are "apt to teach ;" if they

are not, they lose their labor. One has one gift, another has a different gift ; but few men have many gifts. " There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit." 1 Cor. xii : 4.

In this place I take the occasion to add, that it would be a benefit to speakers, and through them an equal benefit to their hearers, that Gospel messengers have nothing to interrupt their work.

As all mankind are, by nature, ignorant ; and are only made wise by information ; so are all concerned for the good of their race, especially parents and friends, to give the young information concerning manners, civil decorum and human rights. And I think they should be equally concerned to give them some rational ideas of religion. The generations to come have nothing to save them from the vortex of superstition, but civil and moral light. Let us be desirous, that such light may be clear, and pray that our teachers may be true hearts, without any hypocrisy ; indulging none—no, not to save their lives !

Finally : A Gospel preacher must be devoted to the Gospel. He must have an ardent love for its glorious doctrines, and a fixed regard for its moral precepts. He must be no time-server ; no man-pleaser. He must serve Christ—fervently and faithfully. May the Gospel of free grace be our delight ; and its pure morals be our practice and honor. AMEN.

## SERMON 5.

BY HOSEA BALLOU.

JOHN xvii. part of 11th verse—Holy Father, keep through thine own name those thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

NEVER did the speaker stand before a congregation with more sensible impressions of the importance of his subject. Never before did he feel more sensibly the deficiency of his ability to do justice to a portion of holy writ, selected for the instruction of his audience. Under these truly embarrassing circumstances, it will be prudent in the preacher, to attempt no more than to present the hearer with as concise, and as clear a view of the most prominent particulars, suggested by the text, as he is able to do, leaving his attentive and discerning hearers, by careful reflection, to carry out the several parts as far as the strength of their discernment and understanding may enable them.

Before we proceed to notice the petition contained in our text, it may not be improper to

take a general view of the prayer in which it is found. In the first petition, Jesus prayed for himself, that the Father might glorify the Son, that the Son might glorify the Father. In the second petition, Jesus prayed for his disciples ; embracing in his prayer sundry particulars, one of which is the subject of the present discourse. In this part of his prayer he said, "I pray for them ; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." In the third petition, he said, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word ; that they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee ; that they also may be one in us ; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one ; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.' After thus extending his prayer so as to embrace the world, Jesus again prays for his disciples ; as if his lingering soul was loth to leave them.

The principal design we had in view, in taking this general survey of the prayer of Jesus, recorded in this chapter, was to compare it with those prayers which his professed ministers are so frequent and fervent in offering to the Father of our spirits, in our times. In these prayers,

all the energy of soul, all the powers of eloquence, and even of imagination, are employed to their utmost extent, not to petition for any of those things embraced in the prayer of Jesus, but that God may be so merciful as not to deliver over his miserable, hell-deserving children, to that everlasting condemnation which they justly deserve ! In these prayers we discover a seeming agony of desire, to move our Creator to the exercise of compassion, by the most fearful and awful representations of the danger his creatures are in, of falling under the vengeance of his wrath !

Every individual of this congregation is now called on to compare all such prayers, which are so frequently offered in our times, with the prayer of our blessed Saviour. And when this comparison is duly made, let the following questions be seriously considered :—1st. Why did not Jesus pray as these do ? If there were any necessity of such prayers, it seems morally certain that Jesus would have so prayed. But such prayers were neither offered by him, nor by his disciples. 2nd. Why do not these professed ministers of Jesus pray as he did ? The true answer to this question will be found in the wide difference, plainly discoverable, between the means which Jesus relied on to bring the world to the knowledge of his doctrine ; and those which these ministers employ. The means on which Jesus relied, by which to effect this be-

nign purpose, was the union and oneness of his disciples, and of all believers, for which he prayed, as we have noticed. But the means which these ministers are exerting to proselyte the world, are to frighten their hearers with the most awful apprehensions of everlasting torments, in the invisible world ; and thereby to induce them to raise funds to bear their expenses in frightening the rest of mankind ! In these means, and in these alone, are they united !

We come now to consider the occasion and circumstances which were present with the Saviour, when he offered the memorable prayer, of which our text is a part.

He had, for the last time, left the temple of God, in Jerusalem. He had brought his ministerial labours to a conclusion. Had warned the Jews, for the last time, of the dire calamities, which their wickedness would bring upon them ; and had denounced the woes which are recorded in Matt. xxiii. and in other places in the New Testament. Look, my friends, his back is toward the temple ; his disciples are with him ; they are descending toward the brook Cedron, which they are to pass, on their way to the garden of Gethsemane, when he is to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. Before they crossed this brook, they paused ; and Jesus offered up the prayer, which we have been noticing. The occasion was deeply interesting, and

awfully solemn. The divine teacher knew what was before him. The sufferings which he was soon to endure, and the death he was to die, lay in open prospect. He was about to leave his chosen, his beloved disciples, as sheep in the midst of wolves. He knew the numerous temptations which would try their fidelity, and he was not ignorant of the human frailty of which they partook. Who, among the wise and prudent of this world, would have thought of establishing a despised religion, and of building a church of permanent duration, by the use of such humble means ! But wisdom divine, shines here. It was the Father's good pleasure to give to this *little flock* a kingdom. To this end their remaining united, in one, as the Father and the Son are one, was indispensable. And for this the Redeemer prayed.

Why did he not apply to some literary institution, to some theological school, and engage the authorities thereof to take his cause, his doctrine, and his disciples, under their care and patronage; and to lend the influence of learning to the propagation and support of his religion? If for no other reason, it was quite sufficient, that no such school, or institution existed, in the world, whose authorities were not opposed to the doctrine and religion of Jesus. But we feel no want of confidence when we say, that such supports are far more efficient in aiding the *doc-*

*trines of men*, than in rendering assistance to the *wisdom of God*.

There were the mitred High Priest, and the whole estate of the elders of Israel ; why did not Jesus intrust his cause, and the protection of his disciples to their power and influence? That was the very power, which he knew was then putting forth all its energies to bring him to the cross ; and he furthermore knew that it would remain as inimical to his disciples, and to his religion as it then was to himself.

Why then did he not apply to the crown of Cæsar, and engage the protection of the Roman authority in favor of the cause, which lay so near his heart, and of his disciples, whom he so affectionately loved? That was the authority which he knew would deliver himself unto death, would bring his disciples to martyrdom, and persecute his religion throughout its empire.

Could he, with any more propriety, or confidence intrust the union of his disciples, and the success of his gospel to his disciples themselves, by an appeal to their integrity? Too well did he know them, to put so sacred a deposit into their hands.

On earth there was no power to which he could, with any confidence, confide the cause, for which he had labored, and for which he was going to lay down his life. But to his Father in heaven, he knew he could appeal, and not be



denied. To his Father in heaven he prayed, and was heard.

If there are any, who imagine that Jesus was an impostor, we pray them to view him in the situation in which he is here presented, and with deliberate candor, say, if there be any history, which gives an account of any other impostor like him.

Let us now pass under consideration the importance of the union and fellowship of the first disciples of Jesus, for the purpose of establishing the gospel in the world, and of laying a solid foundation for his church, against which the gates of hell, or all the power and policy of its enemies could never prevail.

After the divine Master had left them, had these disciples fallen into disunion ; had their fellowship been quickly dissolved ; had they, in their strife, endeavored to circumvent each other ; had they disagreed among themselves in their doctrine ; had they broken into sects ; the confusion of language at Babel would have been harmony in comparison with what they would have taught for christianity ! The chief corner stone would have been deserted, and no superstructure would ever have been raised. There would have been no necessity for the ecclesiastical authorities of the Jews to persecute and waste the church ; for it would quickly have destroyed itself. There would have been no oc-

casion for the political powers and authorities to raise the sword of persecution against a cause, which its own professed friends were engaged, with all the zeal of sectarian animosity, to bring to naught.

This subject may be illustrated, by referring to the declaration of American Independence. After the venerable patriots, who framed that sacred instrument, had given it their names, and had pledged their property, their lives, and their sacred honor to support it ; had they, from whatever inducement, become disunited ; had they employed their mighty minds, and all their influence and means, to frustrate each other's purposes, those armies which were sent to extinguish that spark of liberty which was so alarming to tyranny, would have had nothing to do, but to look on, and see their work accomplished, by the dexterous hands of its professed friends. But it is to the union, which these champions of political liberty maintained, and to the concentration of their influence, means, and exertions, which we look as the rock, which broke the mighty waves, driven by the storm of war to engulf forever the infant republic.

The union, the oneness of the disciples of Jesus was certainly not less indispensable to the establishment of christianity in the world, than was the union of our political fathers, for the de-

fence of our rights, and the permanence of our independence.

The subject under consideration may be further illustrated, by an extension of the comparison we have used. Since the establishment of our national independence, and the due organization of our federal government, we have witnessed serious political divisions. Systematically organized parties have several times arisen. Parties in politics have been loud, persevering, and even vehement against each other; and have strongly maintained widely different opinions concerning men and measures. But do these divisions endanger our independence, or our national existence? We trust not. But why? Because the foundation remains firm and immovable; and all parties look to it, and refer to it; and all parties will defend it. The spirit of union still lives, and we trust it will live, until the principles it has supported in our happy country shall universally prevail, to the destruction of tyranny, and the liberation of the human race.

Notwithstanding the seeming opposition of political parties, now existing, in our republic, should a design be formed by a foreign power to wrest the boon of liberty from us, and subject us to arbitrary power; should the fleets of such an enemy appear in our waters, and his armies attempt to land on our shores, we should soon see the American standard unfurled, and all

eyes directed to the *E Pluribus Unum*,—significant of a united people.

Like what we have noticed in our national concerns, we learn, by history, that after the apostolic age of the church, various and conflicting doctrines were introduced ; divers sects arose ; sectional interests obtained their respective votaries, and much contention rent asunder those who ought to have strove for the unity of the spirit, in the bonds of peace. And the present condition of the great christian community presents an aspect which indicates very little of that sacred union, in which the Saviour prayed that his disciples might be kept. But is christianity in danger of being overthrown, by these divisions ? We trust not. Why ? Because the foundation remains ; and we believe it will remain forever. All sects and denominations of christians look to it ; all refer to it ; and all will endeavor to support it. Whoever attempts to demolish christianity, or to remove the foundation thereof ; let his philosophy be ever so subtle ; his reasoning ever so plausible ; or his attacks ever so bold and daring ; will be met directly on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone.

We may now direct our inquiries to an investigation of the means, by which Jesus prayed his disciples might be kept united ; “ Holy Fa-

ther, keep through thine own name, those thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." It was the NAME of the Father, through, or by which Jesus prayed that his disciples might have their union maintained. It is evident that Jesus meant the same by *name*, as he did by *word*. See verse 6th of the chapter in which our text is recorded: "I have manifested thy *name* unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world ; thine they were, and thou gavest them me ; and they have kept thy *word*." Verse 8th—"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me ; and they have received them." Verse 12th—"While I was with them in the world I kept them in thy *name*." Verse 14th—"I have given them thy *word*." Verse 26th—"I have declared unto them thy *name*." To take up time in proving that by the name of his Father, Jesus meant the doctrine which he was sent to preach, seems quite unnecessary, as it is presumed no one doubts it.

We now find a subject before us of immense moment ; a subject concerning which many controversies have been carried on in the church, for ages, employing all the talent and learning, which the schools could bring to the contest. Numerous creeds have been drawn up by councils, venerable, in the world's estimation, for their profound learning, deep study, and great piety. These *wise* productions have widely

varied from each other ; and generally contain the greatest contradictions in themselves. So deep and profound have been their mysteries, that the learned doctors of the church have found it necessary to write voluminously, to explain them to the common people ; but the common people can no better understand these explanations, than they can the contradictions in the creeds themselves.

We certainly owe it to our subject as well as to ourselves, to ask, why these numerous, and conflicting, and contradictory creeds, have been written. Was it to make divine truth plainer than it is as expressed in the words which the Father gave to the Son, and which the Son gave to his disciples ? If the creeds which men have written, make the doctrine of the Saviour no plainer, no easier to be understood, than do the words of Jesus, there seems to be no need of their having been written at all.

It is a fact, which ought to be seriously regarded, that the example of writing creeds was never set by Jesus or his apostles. Yet no author ever expressed a single tenet more plainly than he expressed all which is necessary for us to believe. Do we desire to know the disposition of our heavenly Father towards us ; and our duty to each other ? And do we desire to understand the real difference between what the wisdom of God teaches on these important points,

and that which is taught by man's imperfect wisdom? All this we have in the following words : " Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy : but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven : for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye ? do not even the publicans the same ? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more more than these ? do not even the publicans so ? Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

If Jesus had intended to express the universal love of God to mankind, and the impartial operations of that love, how could he have expressed it more plainly, than he did in the passage just quoted ? And who can doubt, for one moment, that it was the purpose of the divine teacher to enforce the duty of our loving all men, and of doing good to all, in imitation of the conduct of our heavenly Father ? Let us further ask ; if Jesus had been as careful to guard his hearers against the doctrine of God's universal, impartial goodness, as our clergy now are, could he have made use of more dangerous compari-

sons than he did ? Rain and sunshine ! What preacher ever made use of these to demonstrate his doctrine of partial salvation ?

But it may be asked if Jesus did not teach the doctrine of the resurrection of the human race, and the nature of man's constitution in the future state ? He surely did. And on this subject he was as plain and unequivocal as he was on those points we have just noticed. To the Sadducees, who endeavored to perplex the subject of the resurrection, with a question, which they applied according to their views of analogy, Jesus replied ; 'Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage ; but are as the angels of God in heaven.' This is the substance of all that Jesus taught concerning the resurrection, and man's future state. The positive certainty of the resurrection God confirmed, in that he raised up Jesus from the dead.

It is quite evident, that if the disciples of Jesus continued steadfast in the belief of God's universal, impartial favor towards all men ; and in the belief that God had raised their master and leader from the dead, they were kept through the name or doctrine of God, and were one, as Jesus prayed. But had these disciples lost their confidence in either of those points of faith, they would have discontinued their discipleship at



the same time. Whenever men believe that our Father in heaven does not love all men, they will show their faith by their works ; they will become hateful and hating one another. And it is morally certain that if the disciples had not continued confident of the truth of the resurrection, they would not have continued to preach it, at the constant hazard of their lives.

Thus much it seemed proper to say on the subject of the doctrine of Jesus ; but we have no occasion to enlarge upon it. In the discourses, delivered on this occasion, extensive and critical examinations have been ably and successfully employed, to elucidate the truth as it is in Jesus. But before we take leave of this department of our subject, we must be indulged in noticing an objection, which our brethren, who oppose the doctrine of universal, impartial goodness, constantly reiterate in our ears. This objection contends that the doctrine we preach, as it holds up no state of everlasting torment, in the future world, has not terror enough in it to prevent people from indulging in sin ; and as it teaches that all the human family will eventually, by the favor of God alone, be received to the everlasting enjoyments of immortality ; it does not offer a sufficient reward to induce the heart to the exercise of love to God and to our fellow creatures. If we have stated this objection in different words from those the

objector would use, we feel confident that nothing more is embraced in the form, in which we have stated it, than he intends by the objection. In order to pay a suitable and proper attention to the objection now before us it may be necessary to be a little more familiar with our reverend and pious objector, and with his usual manner of treating these things, than is altogether agreeable to ourselves. And we are not without our fears that some offence may, unintentionally, be occasioned. We will, however, proceed, and suppose a single case, in order to keep our thoughts from diverging from the subject. And that our selection may be respectable, and sufficiently commanding, we will choose a pious, learned Doctor of Divinity. This is our object. His objection we have just stated. Now we are not about to engage in any dispute with this venerable opposer ; we are going to put him to test the strict propriety and weight of his objection to the final salvation of all men.

This reverend divine has, what the world calls, an excellent wife. Such is her character as a wife, a mother, a friend and neighbor, that she is highly and justly esteemed by all who know her. But, in the opinion of her reverend husband, she is in her native, sinful, unconverted state. By some means, concerning which we have not now time to inquire, she does not believe the creed of her husband. Being benevo-

lent and kind herself, she does not believe that her Creator will finally prove to be unmerciful to any. The awful hell, which her husband holds up to his hearers, for the purpose of inducing them to become pious, she is inclined to disbelieve. She loves and adores her God for his goodness ; but has no fear of hell. Her husband endeavors to dissuade her from her dangerous errors ; warns her to flee from the divine vengeance, and seek religion ; tells her she is in danger, every moment, of falling into the bottomless pit of hopeless ruin ; prays God to regenerate his poor, ungodly wife, and snatch her as a brand from the burning. But all his entreaties, persuasions, threatenings and prayers avail nothing. They thus live on together, through this brief moment of mortal existence, and slide into the house appointed for all who live.

The next scene that opens, according to our objector's doctrine, presents us with this man and his wife at the bar of God, in the day of judgment. According to our objector's doctrine, and according to his objection against universal salvation, what does he now expect ? Certainly he expects to be received into heaven and everlasting bliss ; and to see his beloved wife, the mother of his darling children, and whom he so faithfully warned, and for whom he so earnestly prayed, depart into everlasting darkness, and

misery never ending ! Here let us pause for a moment, and suppose that the Judge of all the earth is pleased to condescend to converse with this good man, as he did with Abraham of old. The Judge asks our objector if he believes that his wife is to be sent away into endless torments ? He answers in the affirmative, with firmness. The Judge informs him that his mercy will not consent to make the work of his own hands forever miserable. Our objector grows uneasy, and asks if divine justice does not require her eternal ruin ? He is informed that there is no unmerciful justice in heaven ; and that it best suits the goodness of the Creator, to receive them both to the enjoyments of everlasting life. Our objector now expostulates against such clemency. He urges that there is injustice in such proceedings ; and that he is not dealt with according to his creed. He says that for many years of his life, in the mortal state, he lived piously for fear of eternal damnation ; and that he also loved God and all mankind, expecting to be rewarded therefor with eternal bliss ; that he loved his ungodly wife and treated her kindly for fear of hell ; and that he prayed for her salvation in expectation of an adequate recompense ; but, says he, if I had known all this I never would have been pious a single day ; I would not have loved God nor my fellow men ; no, nor would I have treated my wife with kindness, or ever of-

ferred a single prayer for her salvation. And now, if there be any convenient place for me, I will retire from such society.

My respected auditors, surely the solemnity of this subject cannot possibly induce a smile. No : You did not smile at the subject ; but at the ridiculous folly of the objection. And now, my kind hearers, let me earnestly request you to keep in your minds the objection we have just brought before you ; and whenever you hear those who make pretensions to piety and religion, bring this objection against the doctrine of universal goodness and mercy, carry them, in your minds, to the bar of God, and leave them there to murmur at the goodness of God.

We need to say but little on the nature of the oneness, or union, in which Jesus prayed that his disciples might be kept, as it is clearly defined in the petition. It is such a oneness as exists between the Father and his Son Jesus. We should egregiously miss our way, should we wander into the winding and perplexing labyrinths of what has been called the union of the holy trinity, in order to become acquainted with the union which subsisted among the blessed Apostles. In the prayer where our text is found, Jesus says to the Father, 'As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.' The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. The Son says,

‘I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him who sent me.’ Between the Father and the Son there is manifested a union of will and of purpose ; a union of effort and perseverance. This is the union in which the disciples of Jesus were kept, and by which they were enabled to follow the footsteps of their divine Master, and to establish his cause in the world, on a foundation which will never be removed.

In bringing our subject and labors to a conclusion, my brethren, who are united in the faith of our heavenly Father’s impartial salvation, and especially you, my brethren in the ministry of this abundant grace, will indulge your speaker in calling your most serious attention to the importance of maintaining, among ourselves, that union and fellowship, which alone can make us the happy instruments of extending the influence of the gospel in our times, and by our exertions. That we may be suitably, and effectually incited to this paramount duty, let us always keep in mind this petition of our divine Master, which we have had under consideration. Let us at all times direct our thoughts to him who so ardently prayed that his disciples might remain united, by the power of that holy doctrine which he had delivered to them, as chosen witnesses ; for them to promulgate to the world ; and for the establishment of which, both he and they di-

rected all their exertions, and devoted themselves to shameful mockings, and persecutions, and even unto death.

Our religious opposers would greatly rejoice, and would be much encouraged, could they see us arrayed in opposition against each other. But while we remain united, and stand fast in the *name of the Lord*, one will be able to chase a thousand, and two will put ten thousand to flight. Surely we have enemies enough to contend with. Let the banner of our faith be displayed ; let our *E Pluribus Unum*, be kept in constant view, and show to the world that we are one.

Did your brother, who now addresses you, know that this would be the last opportunity allowed him to give you advice, and surely he knows not the contrary, there is nothing, to which he could call your attention, which is of greater moment, than the keeping of the unity of the Spirit, in the bonds of peace. Whatever sacrifice individuals may find it necessary to make, for the preservation of union and harmony in the circle of brethren, let it be made, should it take the last shilling from the brother of the humblest circumstances, or from him of the largest income. What is all the world, my brethren, without the spirit of union and brotherly love, which gives it all its value ?

Let us all unite, my brethren, in lifting up our hearts to our heavenly Father, as Jesus did, and pray that through his NAME we may remain one.  
**AMEN.**



## SERMON 6.

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BY CLEMENT F. LEFEVRE.

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HEBREWS xii. 1, 2. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us : Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith : who for the joy, that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

THE Apostle in the previous chapter had been introducing a list of worthies, whom the operative principle of a genuine and living faith, had armed with power, of a character almost superhuman. The sufferings of these martyrs in the cause of truth are almost unparalleled in history, and can only be equalled by that greatness of soul and fidelity of purpose by which they were sustained. What a lively picture of intense persecution does the apostle spread before our eyes ! “ They had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments ; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, they wan-

dered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins ; being destitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom the world was not worthy) they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." But how insufficient were these sanguinary measures to arrest the progress of divine truth ! How puny and feeble does that arm appear which raises itself against Him, who " holds the winds in his fist and weighs out the mountains in his balance." The very means which the persecutor uses to extinguish the rising flame, controlled by Him, who does all things after the counsel of his own will, only makes it burn the brighter. Hence we read that these faithful servants "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions : quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

How excellent, how powerful is a living faith ! how invincible is that soul, which is imbued with it ! It sinks under no sufferings—it yields to no temptations—it bends to no circumstances—force cannot subdue it—flattery cannot circumvent it—the storms of adversity beat upon it and it remains uninjured—the sunshine of prosperity surrounds it with its glittering pageantry and it remains incorrupt—its eye cannot be diverted from the bright work on which it is fixed—its

thoughts cannot be beguiled, from the cause in which it is engaged—its hand cannot be restrained from labor in the work—its success is commensurate with its steady purpose—the universe of mind confesses its sway—the vallies of human degradation are exalted by the excellency of its object—the mountains of pride and ambition are removed or prostrated, and it erects its towering monument of true glory on the wreck of persecution, ignorance, cruelty and error.

The apostle having thus introduced us to the martyrs in the cause of truth, and having shown that the sincerity of their faith and fidelity to their purpose, were the great moving principles of their actions, proceeds to recommend their example to his beloved brethren, as worthy of their devoutest imitation. “Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” An evident allusion is here made to the Olympic games, and the exertions which the disciples of Christ were to make, and the cause in which they were embarked, was aptly figured forth by the intense endeavors which the “Agonistee” or contenders in the foot-race made, to reach the destined goal. They are represented as being animated in their undertaking from the consideration that the eyes of the *principal men*.

*of the country*, and a crowd of spectators were fixed upon them ; and by this they were induced to make the most extraordinary efforts. Before entering on this race, they would lay aside every weight that might impede them in their progress, and with patience and perseverance diligently pursue their course. Such was the image which the apostle had in view ; and how forcible, appropriate, and instructive was the selection ! If we call to mind the period in which this sentiment was penned, we cannot but be struck with the fitness of its application. A few dauntless and intrepid souls had entered upon a ministry, against which were combined the wealth, the power, and the learning of the world. They had not merely to wrestle against flesh and blood, but against dominions and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. They had to contend with deep rooted prejudices, long-cherished opinions, and the arm of civil power. As *Reformers* they were sure to experience contumely and reproach—as *innovators*, they would come in contact with the bigotry of the ignorant, and the intolerance of the interested. How necessary was it, then, that in imitation of the antagonists in the race, they should lay aside every weight, divest themselves of every incumbrance, that wealth or interest, power or popularity might lay in their way, and with a single eye, a firm step, and an unwavering mind, patiently and per-

severingly pursue that course which would lead to true glory. There is an expression here introduced by the apostle, which demands a passing notice, namely—"the sin which doth so easily beset us." There is in every man some prevailing passion against which he has to contend with especial diligence. It is one that easily or readily besets him, and would entice him from that path which duty has prescribed as the direct line of conduct. It is only necessary for a man to examine himself to find out the truth of this remark. Some are diverted from the path which judgment dictates, by sloth ; some lose sight of the object by being blinded with passion ; some have ruined the best cause, by indecision of conduct ; intemperance, and "zeal without knowledge" has buried truth for ages ; but whatever the prevailing passion may be, that is hostile to the cause, must be sacrificed. The *besetting* sin, whether it be *constitutional* or *habitual*, must be overcome, and all the energies of the soul, the talents of the mind, the powers of the body, be devoted to the great cause in which it is engaged. If we should experience any difficulty in ascertaining where our "weak spot" lies, let us consult either an honest friend, or an avowed enemy, and we shall not long remain in the dark, for although men are sometimes at a loss to see *their own* failings, they never find any

difficulty in discovering those of their *neighbor's*. The language, then, of the apostle might very properly thus be paraphrased. "Wherefore, seeing the miracles which have been wrought by faith in the mind, and fidelity in the execution, and being surrounded by such a host of witnesses, who have travelled the same path of glory, let us, in imitation of them, lay aside every thing that may divert us from our purpose, and subduing every propensity, especially that to which we are naturally or habitually addicted, let us pursue the course of our ministry with patience, perseverance, fidelity and fortitude."

As if the apostle had not sufficiently stirred up the minds of those to whom he addressed himself, to prosecute the work of righteousness and truth, he directs their eye to that great Exemplar, whose presence might act as inspiration, and whose conduct afforded a perfect pattern for all that is glorious and excellent. "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." This allusion was most happy and significant. The word which is here rendered *author*, signifies in the original language, *captain*, or *leader*. Thus were the minds of these Hebrew christians led at once to contemplate the character of the great "captain of our salvation." He was the author,

the founder of this glorious system in which we rejoice ; and true to the cause, true to the hardy band of followers, who were engaged with him, he valiantly opposed the error and cruelty that were in the world, died in the great work of mental emancipation, and left the astonished multitude to exclaim—this was indeed the very Christ—the Saviour of the world.

The particular reference which the apostle makes to the object which Christ had in view, and which he notices under the expression of “the joy which was set before him,” will very naturally lead us to inquire what was the *joy* of Christ ? In answer to this the Scripture furnishes us with a most satisfactory reply. The joy of Christ was to do the will of his heavenly Father—it was his meat and drink ; “in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea thy law is within my heart.” Whatever, then, might be the will of God, that will was the joy that was set before Christ. This then provokes the enquiry, what was the will of God in the advent of the Redeemer ? Was it a *partial* display of goodness, or one of a *universal* character ? We do not here inquire what will be the result ; we leave that for future consideration ; but the question to which our inquiries tend, is simply this : was the design of God in sending his Son into the world, to extend his redeeming mercies to *all*,

or only to a select number ? We think there can be no difficulty in answering this question. Shall we consult the promises ? Then shall we find that in Christ, the seed of Abraham, all the families of the earth should be blessed. Shall we look to the prophecies ? behold they are equally explicit. "He shall finish transgressions, make an end of sin, and bring in an everlasting righteousness." "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked ways shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." If we have any unfaithful doubts, any unbelieving fears, let us apply to the Prince of peace himself. "This is the will of him that sent me, that of all that he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but raise it up at the last day." Should it be asked how much God had given to Christ, the answer is, "he gave him power over all flesh, because he was the son of man." Shall we consult the apostles and find a different will manifested on the part of God ? No. The author of our text could offer up his devotions in faith for all mankind, and believe that his prayer was congenial to the design of Him, "who will



have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of his truth." As far, then, as the council of the Deity is concerned, it is in favor of universal salvation ; the only difficulty which remains to solve, is whether this will, will be accomplished ; and this will lead us to consider another particular mentioned in the text, that we should look unto Jesus, not only as the *author*, but the *finisher* or perfecter of our faith. We remark in the *first* place, that if the will of God is not accomplished, then his purposes or design in the redemption of man, must be frustrated. But this is absolutely impossible from the nature of the Deity himself. A God who wills the salvation of his creatnres, but cannot accomplish his desire, is a very weak God. We admire his benevolence, but we pity his infirmity. We read that "they have no sense or knowledge, who pray to a God that *cannot* save." And such seems to be precisely the character of this good-natured, but weak Being. Let us be careful not to join such senseless worshippers. Let the God whom we adore, be at least, one that is infinite in his attributes—a being who has devised the best possible plan that infinite wisdom could suggest, that infinite power could accomplish, and that infinite love can dictate.

If, again, this will of the Deity is not accomplished, then will Christ also be disappointed in his object. He came to do the will of his heav-

only Father—that was his joy that was set before him—that was his delight. If, then, instead of redeeming a world, the Great Captain of our Salvation should ultimately deliver only a few captives, and the arch enemy should rob him of the spoil—and while Christ has his thousands, the enemy should have his tens of thousands, how could he ever “see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied?” Who would be the conqueror? Surely there can be no difficulty in answering this question. But we believe that the will of God will be accomplished, because there is nothing that can resist it. We cannot believe that man possesses a power that defies Omnipotence. We have not so far involved ourselves in the mazes of heathen mythology, as to believe that a successful war can be waged with heaven. We believe not, that God has given his creatures a power that must be destructive of his own purposes, and that like the fabled giants of old, but with more success, men can shake the firm throne of the Eternal himself—and hurl back at Omnipotence his own red thunderbolts. No—we are forced to adopt the conclusion, that whatever the will of God may be towards his creatures, whether that he shall blot them from the map of existence, and leave them in an eternal night—or whether he shall raise them up to linger in a state of unending torment—or what appears to us most consistent with his goodness,

—most Godlike in him, while it is most consolatory to man, that he will make them the everlasting monuments of his goodness. Whatever the destiny of man may be, it will be precisely that, which the Eternal God intended that it should be—it will be in unison with his will, his purpose and his design.

Again, we believe that the will of God towards the human race is of the most gracious character. That God has ever had towards his dependent offspring all those feelings of affection and love that characterize the best and most tender of parents. When then Christ appeared among men, he was but the image of his Father's own adorable perfections, manifesting in a life of tenderness, mercy, compassion and forgiveness—that very disposition which God entertains towards his frail children. Christ was but the reflex lustre of his Father's perfections, manifested for our better acquaintance, in the flesh, that he might be our elder brother.

To make known these great and consoling truths—to hold up the character of the Father of the spirits of all flesh in its true light—to make known his will towards the children of men—that was his mission—it was the mission of love to a foolish and blind world—this was the joy that was set before him—for this, he endured the cross and despised the shame. Yes ; and though he was well aware that in order to effect our rescue

from darkness and delusion, he must quit the bosom of the Father, and unite his pure spirit to our sinful flesh—though he knew that for the songs of angels and the joys of heaven, he would meet with the contradictions of sinners, and the assaults of hell—though gifted with prophetic vision, he saw from the height above, every step that he should have to travel in the earth below; though he saw the principalities and powers of darkness ready to dispute with him every inch of the territory that they had usurped; though, to use the lofty language of the prophet Isaiah, he saw that the battle would be “with confused noise and garments rolled in blood”—the prospect of all these sufferings could not for a moment divert him from his purpose of bringing the prisoners out of the pit. Impelled by love, strong as death—love which many waters could not quench neither could the floods drown—love which passeth knowledge, he said, lo, I come—neither turned he away back, but taking out of our hands the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of fury, he suffered it not, bitter and deadly as it was, to pass from him, till having drunk the last drop, he could exclaim, *It is finished.*

In view of this exalted and sublime character of Christ, well might the apostle direct the attention of the brethren to this “author and finisher of his faith”—well might he lay before them the brilliant path of glory which he trod, in the office

of his ministry—well might he propose his example as worthy of their devoted imitation, and while they should experience the buffetings of fortune—while the treachery of friends or the malice of enemies, should shake their purpose—they might “consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest they should be wearied and faint in their minds.” Perhaps no followers of Christ were more persecuted and labored more abundantly than the eminent author of our text. He experienced all the malice that a partialist church could inflict, because he preached a “God who was the Saviour of all men.” But while he was laboring in the cause of impartial grace, while he was declaring to the family of mankind the unsearchable riches of Christ, he found that when his labors abounded, his consolations did much more abound. The glorious theme of a world’s redemption, inspired his tongue, and nerved his arm for the conflict. He arrayed himself in the panoply of heaven. “His loins were girt about with the girdle of truth ; his breast was secured by the breastplate of righteousness. His feet were shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace—on his arm he took the shield of faith—his head was adorned with the helmet of salvation, while he held in his hand, the sword of the Spirit, the word of the living God.” Thus ac-

coutered with weapons tryed in the furnace of divine love, he was more than conqueror through him that loved us. He destroyed his enemies—even as God will destroy his enemies—by making them his friends—by removing the dark clouds in which ignorance and error have involved them, and pouring the light of divine truth in their benighted minds. May every servant of our Master thus go armed to the combat, for thus alone may he hope for success in turning men from the power of satan to the power of God.

The application of our subject is full of instruction. We *believe* that we are preaching the same doctrine as our blessed Master and his faithful apostles. Of one thing we are *certain*, that we experience the same reproach and persecution. There is scarcely an epithet of opprobrium which is applied to us, that has not been bestowed on Him, who is the author and finisher of our faith. Are we called blasphemers? So was he. Are we accused of being the friends of publicans and sinners? So was he. Are we spoken of as emissaries of the prince of darkness? Behold he was accused of being in league with Beelzebub. Do we advocate the cause of tolerance and liberty of conscience, against the various schemes which avarice has invented to impose upon the world? Then like our Master we are accused of being gluttons and wine bib-

bers and sabbath-breakers. Do we both labor and suffer reproach? Then it is, because, like faithful Paul, "we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men." Brethren, since such is the case, let us arm ourselves with the same mind which was also in Christ Jesus. Remember, "if a man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Let us return good for evil, not railing for railing, but contrarywise blessing. And this we can do, without any compromise of duty. It does not require that we should wink at error or withhold truth. No—our duty is to declare the whole counsel of God. Error can never be made more odious than it is in itself; and we fear that much injury has been done to the world from an unwillingness to strip off her meretricious ornaments and produce her in her naked deformity. But while we thus deal with error, let us spare the errorist. It is bad enough to be deceived by lies, without being abused for our credulity. When we see the world at large, blinded with a false theology—dreading the vengeance of an angry God—their happiest moments clouded by the fictitious terror of a future state, they are objects of our sincerest pity. The slave tied to the galley for life, or the prisoner that drags about the ruthless chain, is not so worthy of our commiseration. "The iron that enters the soul" cuts the deepest—the chain that is on the mind is the most intolerable.

In the promulgation of the doctrine of the gospel, we have the same encouragement as the apostle. "We are compassed about with a cloud of witnesses." Surely, my brethren, we have much to encourage here. How few years is it, since the pilgrim Murray unfurled the banner of universal salvation and sounded the gospel trumpet. Around that broad banner, how many thousands of noble souls have now assembled—how has that sound from the trumpet gone through the continent and borne on the wings of the wind echoed and re-echoed, till every hamlet has heard the glad tidings of salvation. I cannot cast my eye over this assembled multitude—I cannot see the east and west—the north and south, pouring in their heralds of the cross—I cannot recal the history of the past, when two or three undaunted souls breasted the storm alone—and see what I now see, and hear what I now hear, and not exclaim, Blessed be God—"we are compassed about with a cloud of witnesses." The very thought is inspiration, and we could almost say, like the good old Simeon when he took the new-born Messiah in his arms, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes *have* seen thy salvation."

Let us improve our subject by following the apostolic injunction—whatever may be the weights, which oppresses this holy cause—whatever may be the besetting sin—let us lay it aside.



While a world's redemption is the theme of our teaching, let union and brotherly love be the ornaments of our lives. All minor points should be forgotten. Whether Christ is a merely human or a super-angelic being—whether punishment ceases with extinction of life in that body in which sin was committed ; or whether the spirit suffer a state of disciplinary punishment, and like the fabled shades of the poet, wanders for a hundred years on the dark shores of the Stygian lake—because its propitiatory sacrifice was not offered, and the penitential tear had not washed away the *last damning* sin—whether man possesses an immortal soul, or whether the next state is dependent entirely on the resurrection—these are subjects on which universalists may differ, and perhaps always will differ, but which should not occasion division in their ranks. I do not wish to be understood as saying these subjects should not be canvassed. So far from this, they should be examined with all attention and candour, that we may learn all the light on the subject that we can. But while we are engaged in these inquiries, let us remember, that they are secondary to the great truths in which we are all agreed—that the government of the Deity is truly paternal—that religion and virtue carry a present reward in their bosom, and vice carries its sting with it—in other words, that duty is the road to happiness, and disobedience is the

way of misery. While, then, we are united in inculcating these important truths, which, while they are most consolatory to man, are purifying in their influence on the moral character, let us not break the bond of fellowship by mere dissent on speculative opinions. Our business is to destroy the foul monster endless misery, that has so long deceived the nations and filled the earth with terror, insanity, suicide and death. When we shall have slain this mammoth which is desolating the folds, we can then, at our leisure, turn and rid ourselves of less noxious animals.

Finally, brethren, let us study our own characters and search our own hearts, and if we discover any besetting sin, that stands opposed to the propagation of the pure gospel of Christ, let us immolate it on the altar of duty. Let this cause rise paramount in all our hearts—we cannot be engaged in one more God-like—or that will carry more peace to the soul—it is the cause of truth, religious freedom, and benevolence, against the united forces of error, superstition, cruelty and oppression. Let us then devote ourselves to propagating it—be instant in season and out of season—recommend it by our lives, so shall we walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith we are called—so shall we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

AMEN.

## APPENDIX.

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It is thought that a short account of the Convention, at which the foregoing sermons were delivered; embracing a concise statement of the proceedings of that body, together with its *circular address*, might be a suitable and desirable appendix to this little volume; and which is accordingly here given.

This General Convention of the denomination of universalists, convened at Concord, N. H. to hold its annual session, according to adjournment, on Wednesday and Thursday, 19th and 20th of September 1832. On the preceding evening, after devout prayer, offered by Br. Robert Bartlett, the Council was duly organized by the choice of

BR. HOSEA BALLOU, *Moderator*.

BR. THOMAS F. KING, *Clerk*, and

BR. HOSEA BALLOU, 2d, *Assistant Clerk*.

A committee of five, (three clergymen and two lay brethren) was appointed to arrange the public services of the occasion.

Brs. Russell Streeter, T. J. Greenwood, and Warren Skinner, were appointed a committee on applications for letters of Fellowship and Ordination.

A committee was appointed consisting of two brethren from each State within the jurisdiction of this convention to consider the subject of a General Convention of Universalists, for the whole denomination in the United States, and to report thereon.

On Wednesday morning, after prayer by Br. Brimblecom, the Fellowship of the Convention was, on request, granted to the "First Universalist Society in Hanover, N. H."

In the afternoon, the committee appointed on the subject of a General Convention of Universalists for the United States, reported in favor of such a convention.

The committee on Fellowship and Ordination reported in favor of granting fellowship to Brs. T. H. Taylor, and A. Norwood, and that ordination be conferred on Br. H. F. Stearns, which report was accepted.

On Thursday morning, after prayer by Br. J. Annear, letters from several societies were read,

and the report of the committee on the proposed formation of a U. S. Convention was discussed, and after mature deliberation, in the afternoon, the report was adopted.

Committees were appointed to enquire into the literary qualifications of candidates for the ministry. Committees of discipline were also appointed.

The Clerk was requested to prepare the minutes of the session, and procure them published, accompanied by a Circular Letter.

After uniting in devout prayer with the Moderator, the convention adjourned to meet in Strafford, Vt. on the third Wednesday and Thursday of September, 1833.

### CIRCULAR LETTER FOR 1832.

The Ministers and Delegates composing the "General Convention of Universalists," send salutations of peace and christian affection, to all of like precious faith wheresoever scattered abroad:—

**BELoved BRETHREN:**—It is with great joy that we address to you this annual epistle, because we have reason to be assured that all faithful Universalists are both eager and happy to learn any facts connected with the spread of their peculiar doctrines.

We were received by our brethren in Concord, with a most hearty welcome, and many of us, during the session, were kindly entertained by christians of other denominations. This last circumstance, in connexion with the fact, that every house of worship in the place was voluntarily offered for the use of the Convention, indicates a very favorable change in the public sentiment respecting our views of God and his moral government.

There are, it is true, a few bigoted clergymen scattered here and there over the country, who seem to cherish such a settled enmity against Universalists, and especially against Universalist preachers, that they would exclude us from the common civilities of life; but we have reason to be thankful that their influence is diminishing every year. This is particularly the case in New England. In this enlightened portion of our happy country, the very *name* of bigotry is becoming odious to the great mass of the people, and where its *reality* is exhibited, it of course, either excites general pity or contempt.

Our council was composed of forty-nine preachers, and an unusual number of lay delegates, among the latter of whom, we were highly pleased to recognize some of the venerable fathers in our Israel.

It is worthy of remark, that the only surviving member of the first Universalist Society on the

continent of America, was present with us, and took part in the deliberations of the council. This was Col. Wm. Pierce, of Gloucester, Mass. who although at the advanced age of more than *four score years*, still retains his bodily and mental powers, in almost undiminished vigor. The feelings of this venerable patriarch must be truly enviable in respect to what he has seen and heard of the rise and progress of our glorious doctrine in the United States. Surely he may say in the language of Simeon of old, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

The business of the council was transacted in the exercise of a spirit of kindness and mutual forbearance. There was one subject, however, (the formation of a General Convention of Universalists in the United States,) on which a difference of opinion was manifested. This measure was debated with great freedom and frankness, both by its friends and opposers, and was finally adopted contrary to the wishes of a very respectable minority.

The majority of the Convention was decidedly of the opinion, that a general bond of union in our denomination, was both desirable and

practicable. They therefore voted to recommend to the brotherhood throughout the country the formation of State Conventions where such bodies do not already exist, and that these State Conventions be represented at our next meeting in Strafford, Vt. either by letter or delegation—the latter mode will of course always be the most acceptable.

There are already existing six State Conventions, viz.—Maine, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Ohio. Of these, four had appointed delegates to confer with us on the expediency of the aforesaid measure; but we regret to say, that the delegation from the State Conventions of Pennsylvania and Connecticut, were unable to attend in person. The former of these ecclesiastical bodies was represented by letter, from which we make the following brief extract, as expressive of the views of our brethren in Pennsylvania: “We are decidedly in favor of forming the proposed Convention, provided the powers in it vested are only *advisory*.”

Such also are the views of the brethren in Maine and New York, as distinctly stated by their representatives.

From information received during the session, we have reason to expect that State Conventions will be organized in the course of the current year, in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massa-



chusetts. We should be highly gratified to learn the views of our brethren in South Carolina on the utility of this general union, and we would respectfully suggest to them the propriety of taking some order on this subject, at the next annual meeting of their respective State Conventions, and of communicating officially the result of their deliberations thereon, to Rev. Hosea Bal-  
lou 2d. of Roxbury, Mass. who is the standing clerk of our Convention.

Beloved Brethren—We can assure you that a revival of religion, in the best sense of these abused terms, is rapidly spreading throughout our land by the preaching of universal salvation. It is begetting in the minds of men a calm and unshaken confidence in their heavenly Father—it is expanding their hearts with that charity towards their fellow men, which is the bond of perfectness. Those who are interested in the support of bigotry and superstition are evidently alarmed at the favorable change that is taking place in the religious views, and hopes, and prospects, of those who are converted to our faith. Nor are they much less apprehensive respecting its *indirect* effect on the popular faith and worship.

Orthodoxy, it is true, has the same *nominal* existence now, in the creeds, that it had in the early settlement of the country. The *five points* of Calvinism are still held, or retained, in the

acknowledged standards of faith in most orthodox churches, as being the very cream of the gospel; and yet how careful are the clergy to modify and soften the rugged features of these several doctrines. They know that the people will not receive such horrid doctrines for the gospel if represented in the honest, undisguised manner of our puritan forefathers; and hence it has happened that the divinity taught from the pulpits of the evangelicals (as they modestly call themselves) differs so widely from that of the Assembly's Catechism, and other kindred formularies.

Brethren in the ministry—Let these facts encourage us to renew our zeal in the cause of christian Universalism—they are among the sure indications, that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.”—It is worthy of record, that there never was so great a demand for Universalist preachers as at present. From almost every town in New England, the Macedonian cry is heard, “come over and help us.” Let the young men of our denomination who are preparing for the ministry, be encouraged by these facts—let them apply themselves diligently to their appropriate studies, that they

may enter the field of labor abundantly qualified for usefulness.

Let every preacher in fellowship be careful to guard his heart from the seductive charms of popularity. Let us all conduct so as to deserve the good opinion of the community, but God forbid that we should ever attempt to purchase it, by a surrender of our independence, or by a compromise with error. Let us remain united among ourselves, and faithful to the great principles of the gospel, and we have nothing to fear.

All who read this epistle are affectionately exhorted to put their trust in God as the universal Father and benefactor of mankind—to consider well, and to discharge truly their obligations to Him. May they rejoice in his love, as manifested to the world through his Son Jesus Christ, and give all diligence to add to their faith virtue and all the christian graces. “Then shall their light break forth as the morning, and the glory of the Lord shall be their reward.”

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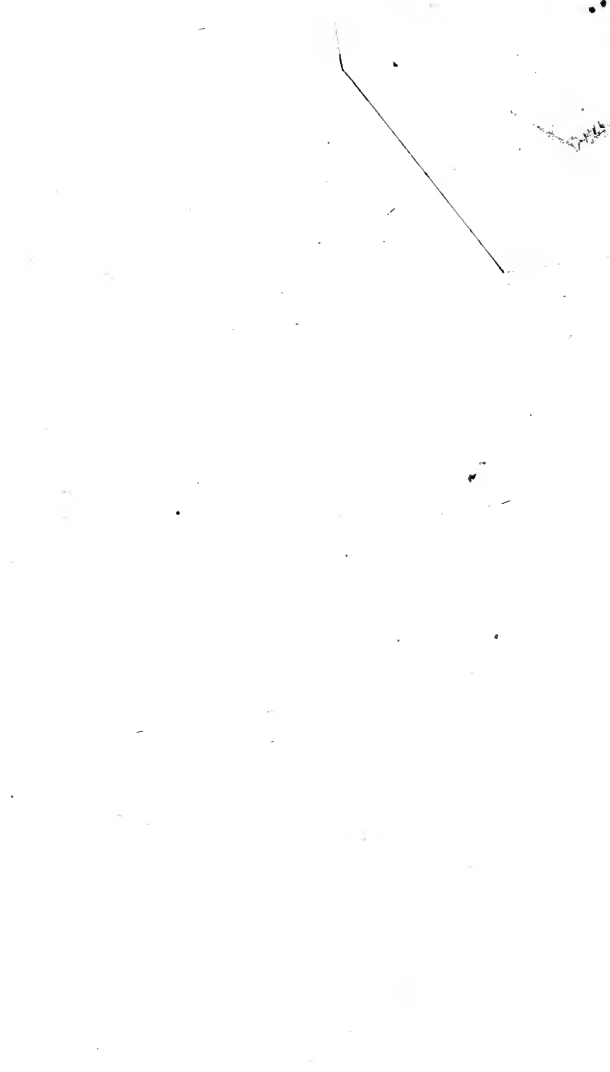
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